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TITLE:

**THE SARATOGA CAMPAIGN:
MANEUVER WARFARE, THE CONTINENTAL ARMY,
AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR**

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Abstract <p>The Saratoga Campaign (June-October 1777) was a watershed event for the United States. The American conduct of the campaign is a textbook study in the application of the tenets of maneuver warfare principles at the operational and tactical levels. General Schuyler's brilliant shaping campaign against the British Forces as they advanced from Fort Ticonderoga to Albany forced General Burgoyne to detach elements of his force, which the Americans were able to isolate, mass forces against, and destroy. Ultimately, Schuyler's shaping cased the British campaign to culminate prior to the main engagements, known as the first and second battles of Saratoga. Occupying a prepared Defensive Position North of Saratoga, the Americans, led by General Arnold, conducted a forward oriented Defense that seized the initiative from the British and disrupted their preconceived plans. The American counter-attacks which demonstrated the American Mastery of seeking gaps and avoiding surfaces, attrited the British Force to such an extent that they were forced to surrender. The victory of the makeshift American Force over the Professional British-Led Force Demonstrates the superiority of maneuver warfare versus Attritionist Techniques, and is of contemporary interest to the USMC.</p>		
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: THE SARATOGA CAMPAIGN: MANEUVER WARFARE, THE CONTINENTAL ARMY, AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR.

Author: Major Paul D. Montanus, USMC

Thesis: That Maneuver Warfare is a quintessentially American way of war, and its application by the Continental Army during the Saratoga Campaign of 1777 enabled the Americans to defeat a much larger, veteran British force.

Discussion: The American conduct of the Saratoga Campaign during the Revolutionary War (May 1777 to Oct 1777) is a textbook study of maneuver warfare at the operational and tactical levels. The campaign pitted a highly trained, professional British army (which at the time was considered one of the most powerful in the world), well-versed in European attrition tactics, against a smaller, makeshift American force. The Americans, led by Generals Schuyler, St. Clair, Gates, and Arnold, and Colonels Stark and Morgan, were able to defeat the British because they employed maneuver warfare principles, a philosophy that was uniquely American, born out of the frontier experience. Although he was tasked to conduct a defense at Fort Ticonderoga, St. Clair's decision to withdraw in the face of superior force was in concurrence with Schuyler's commander's intent. By executing the withdrawal, he ensured the survival of the operational COG.

Once the British Commander, General Burgoyne, made his fateful decision to take the overland route to Albany, Schuyler developed a brilliant campaign plan. He quickly and accurately assessed friendly and enemy COGs, and implemented operations that targeted enemy critical vulnerabilities and protected his own. His shaping operations canalized British movements to a single LOC, which made their movements predictable. His obstacles delayed the British advance to the point that Burgoyne was forced to wait several times to build up supplies, which facilitated recruitment and reconstitution of the American force. The delays so impeded Burgoyne's progress that Schuyler was able to risk detaching sizable portions of his force to concentrate on separate enemy elements at Bennington and Ft. Stanwix. As a result of Schuyler's shaping, Burgoyne's cohesion was shattered, and his campaign culminated before he reached the field of battle at Saratoga.

At the First and Second Battles of Saratoga, the American commander, wisely listening to General Benedict Arnold, conducted an aggressive, forward oriented defense that seized the initiative from the British attacks and clearly disrupted their preconceived plans. Tactically, the Americans showed a proclivity for seeking gaps and avoiding surfaces. As a result of the two failed attacks on the American's defensive positions at Bemis Heights, Burgoyne was placed into such a situation that he was forced to surrender or suffer annihilation. On October 17, 1777, General Burgoyne surrendered his army to the American commander.

Conclusion(s) or Recommendation(s): The Saratoga Campaign offers a uniquely American case study on the application of maneuver warfare techniques at the operational and tactical levels. The British defeat at Saratoga clearly demonstrates the superiority of maneuver warfare as a warfighting philosophy, and is of contemporary interest to the United States Marine Corps.

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THE SARATOGA CAMPAIGN: MANEUVER WARFARE, THE CONTINENTAL ARMY, AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR

Chapter 1

Background

“Perhaps an unprecedented Instance that near 6,000 British & foreign Troops, under the command of an accomplish'd General, should surrender themselves Prisoners of War *in the field* to an Army of raw Continental Troops & Militia!”

Henry Sewall, York, Maine Oct 17-18, 1777

Introduction

Since 1989, maneuver warfare has been the cornerstone of Marine Corps education and the hallmark of its operations, as defined by *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication-1 (MCDP-1) Warfighting*.

America's embracing of the tenets of maneuver warfare is not a post-1989 phenomenon. In fact, maneuver warfare is a quintessentially American way of war. This paper will focus on the Continental Army's conduct of the Saratoga Campaign, fought from May 1777 to Oct 1777. Although the campaign was conducted over 200 years ago, a detailed analysis of the campaign, using the concepts contained in MCDP-1 as a reference, will provide a unique and contemporary template.

The American victory, described as the turning point of the Revolutionary War, is more remarkable since the American army that faced the British force at the beginning of the campaign was a much smaller, less trained, admixture of regular and ad-hoc militia units. In contrast, the British force was a well-trained, professional force well versed in the modern, European, attritionist tactics of the age. Resourceful American leaders such as Generals Schuyler, St. Clair, Arnold, and Colonels Stark and Morgan displayed an uncanny knack for maneuvering their forces, avoiding the British strengths, attacking their weaknesses, and massing only when the situation clearly favored them. They shaped the battlefield, employed speed, surprise, and boldness to seize the initiative, and dictated the tempo on the battlefield. These maneuvers placed the British forces in a rapidly deteriorating situation from which they were not able to escape. The surrender of British General John Burgoyne to General Horatio Gates on the

field of battle near Saratoga, New York clearly validates the superiority of maneuver warfare as a warfighting philosophy

This paper presupposes that the reader will have a basic, working knowledge of the Revolutionary War, and therefore will only examine specific events in detail when necessary to illustrate a central argument. Beginning with a brief review of the tenets of maneuver warfare and the general situation in order to establish an analytical framework, an analysis of the British and American strategic objectives and centers of gravity is conducted. Then, the corresponding operational objectives, campaign plans, and centers of gravity of both sides are analyzed. Finally, this paper will analyze the operational maneuvers and tactical actions during the campaign, focusing principally on the Americans. The analysis will show that the Americans utilized the principles of maneuver warfare to win the campaign, and therefore is of contemporary interest to the United States Marine Corps.

I began researching this paper with the intent to focus on General Gates and the First and Second Battles of Saratoga, since they have often been referred to as the principle events in the campaign. *However, my research revealed that the real heroes of the campaign were General Schuyler, and to a lesser extent, General St. Clair.* In fact, the outcome of the campaign had already been decided by the time that General Burgoyne crossed the Hudson River before the First Battle of Saratoga due to the actions of these two commanders. This is ironic since Generals Schuyler and St. Clair were first relieved of command, then court-martialed for their conduct during the campaign.

Maneuver Warfare Defined

It is important to briefly review the tenets of maneuver warfare before conducting the analysis of the Saratoga Campaign. MCDP-1 states:

Maneuver Warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.¹

¹ Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 (MCDP-1) *Warfighting* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1997), pg 73.

The key to maneuver warfare is its orientation on the enemy. It is a philosophy that utilizes "rapid, flexible, and opportunistic"² spatial, temporal, psychological, and technological maneuver to gain an advantage over the enemy. The focus of this maneuver is the enemy's key strengths, also referred to as Centers of Gravity (COGs). In his timeless classic, *On War*, Carl Von Clausewitz described the COG as a "hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."³ These critical sources of strength and support (COGs) are things that the enemy's war efforts cannot function without, such as the will to fight, a military unit, or even an alliance network, and they exist at all levels of war. Unlike attrition warfare, which seeks the enemy's physical destruction by pitting friendly strength against enemy strength, maneuver warfare seeks to defeat the enemy while at the same time avoiding enemy concentrations.

Maneuver warfare views the enemy COG as a system, with critical requirements that enables it to operate effectively. Some of these requirements will be vulnerable to attack, and these critical vulnerabilities are what becomes the focus for our efforts. By avoiding enemy strengths and exploiting gaps in his disposition, forces can be maneuvered within the enemy system, and by destroying the critical vulnerabilities, shatter the cohesion of the COG. Since the enemy commander will seek to prevent this from occurring, and the opportunities to attack a critical vulnerability might be fleeting, maneuver warfare must be "ruthlessly opportunistic, actively seeking out signs of weakness against which we will direct all available combat power."⁴

Maneuver warfare is not a passive style of warfare. A commander can actively shape the battlefield in his favor to create situations that puts an enemy commander in a dilemma, and his critical vulnerabilities in jeopardy. Shaping operations include physical alteration of the battlefield, information and psychological operations, and the positioning of forces along multiple axes. These multiple efforts are coordinated through the use of broad mission type orders and clear commander's intents, which allows for small unit commanders to employ flexibility and agility while adapting their efforts to the local situation,

² MCDP-1, pg 73.

³ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pgs 595-596.

ensuring that all efforts are directed towards a common goal. Then, by utilizing the above principles, forces can operate with "speed, focus, surprise, and boldness,"⁵ to destroy exposed critical vulnerabilities. In summary, maneuver warfare "is a state of mind bent on shattering the enemy morally and physically by paralyzing and confounding him, by quickly and aggressively exploiting his vulnerabilities, and by striking him in the way that will hurt him the most."⁶

Americans and Maneuver Warfare

Maneuver warfare, as defined above, is hardly a new concept. In fact, as indicated earlier, it is a quintessentially American method of warfare, and was effectively employed by the American Army in the Revolutionary War. The Americans, just prior to the Saratoga campaign, was a "composite of the Old World and New."⁷ Of major significance to the American employment of maneuver warfare philosophy was the "new" portion of the composite, which was born in the colonial experience. The Americans had developed a unique style of warfare born from a rugged individualism dictated by the nature of the wilderness in which they were trying to make a home. The Americans were fiercely independent, making them less receptive to subordination and regimentation than the Europeans, which necessitated the adoption of commander's intents and broad mission-type orders. General Von Stueben, arguably the principle architect of the Continental Army, recognized this trait when he stated to a Prussian officer

The genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians, or French. You say to your soldier, 'Do this' and he doeth it; but I am obliged to say 'This is the reason why you ought to do that,' and then he does it.⁸

Combined with an appreciation for the value of a well-aimed shot, a result of constant battles with Indians, along with simply hunting for sustenance, this independent nature resulted in a regular army that

⁴ MCDP-1, pg 75.

⁵ MCDP-1, pg 49.

⁶ MCDP-1, pg 96.

⁷ Dan Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence, Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), pg 3.

⁸ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pg 219.

was a unique admixture of Europe and the frontier.⁹ Additionally, they had to adapt tactics for employing weapons to the rugged terrain, and as a result, created a very fluid style of warfighting. General Burgoyne best described the capabilities of an American soldier, when he said that each was "his own general, who will turn every tree and bush into a kind of temporary fortress."¹⁰

The "old" portion of the army was the regulars of Continental Line. These were General Washington's most reliable forces, since they enlisted for terms of one year or more, and as a result received rudimentary training in the European tactics of the era. Most of the officers in the army had experience with British tactics and techniques, having fought either in the British army or with it in the French and Indian War. These experienced officers became critical requirements for the Continental forces, since they were the only persons formally trained in military principles. As a result of the dearth of experienced officers, the inability to replace them became a critical vulnerability to the Americans at the tactical level.

As result of the American's experiences with the British, they had a healthy respect for the lethality of the British army, but paradoxically disdained their attritionist methods because of the value that the Americans placed on the individual human life. Since many senior commanders and officials believed that a standing army was essential for winning the war, the Continental forces became centers of gravity for the rebellion.¹¹ However, the limited training that the Continentals received did not enable them to fight the British conventionally on the open field. Since the size of the Continental Army on the eve of the Saratoga campaign was approximately 9,000¹², and this critical resource had to be conserved, such engagements were generally avoided and became an operational critical vulnerability.

⁹ Royster, pg 70.

¹⁰ George Athen Billias, ed, *George Washington's Generals and Opponents - Their Exploits and Leadership* (New York: First DaCapo Press, 1994), pg 163.

¹¹ Royster, pg 66.

¹² Russel F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (New York: Macmillian Publishing, 1973), pg4.

The militia system is the best example of the Colonial experience, and regarded by the Americans as the “natural” way to fight, by responding to a challenge instead of honor or reward.”¹³ The militia system was a loose confederation of individuals that lived and worked together closely, who would pick up arms to defend their homes or regions, but were reluctant to travel far to fight. Once they felt that the threat to their individual interests had been eliminated, they would often disband and return to their homes. The unique character of these fiercely independent individuals was a result of their life on the frontier, where their very survival was dependent upon their ability to adapt to their environment, and endure tremendous hardships, including Indian attacks. Their warfighting philosophy embodied many of the Indian techniques, such as ambushes, hit-and run tactics, and, in stark contrast to the Europeans, they were unconstrained by seasons or darkness. In context of the rebellion, the militia system was very dependent on the fortunes of war; unless their survival was directly threatened, very few men would volunteer to pick up arms and fight if there was little chance for success.

The militia forces had the same critical vulnerabilities as the Continental forces, principally their inability to fight the British in a force on force engagement. George Washington identified it when he said

Men just dragged from the tender Scenes of domestick life; unaccustomed to the din of Arms; totally unacquainted with every kind of Military skill, which being followed by a want of confidence in themselves, when opposed to Troops regularly train'd, disciplined, and appointed, superior in knowledge, and superior in Arms, makes the timid and ready to fly from their own shadows.¹⁴

Additionally, since they often rallied around popular leaders, the officer leadership became another tactical critical requirement, and like the Continentals, the inability to replace the competent militia leaders became a significant tactical critical vulnerability. Due to the lack of Continental regulars, the American’s ultimate chances for success rested in the ability to raise militias to fight. Since the militiamen's willingness to volunteer rested upon a reasonable expectation of success of a direct threat to survival, a strategic center of gravity for the Americans became the will to fight.

¹³ Higgenbotham, pg 12.

¹⁴ Peter G. Tsouras, *Warriors Words: A Quotation Book* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1992), pg 262.

Strategic Overview

In June 1777, the war was not going well for the Americans. General Washington, the American Commander in Chief, had faced a series of defeats in the past twelve months. As a result of the defeat at New York and the failed Canada Campaign, American morale was plummeting. General Washington's army, once as large as 19,000, had been significantly reduced to approximately 9,000. General Washington believed that successful attainment of America's strategic objective, which was nothing less than independence¹⁵, was reliant on the regulars of the Continental Army, the only reliable forces he possessed, even though he recognized that they could not match the British on a conventional field of battle. He also recognized that the will of the American public, which would directly affect his ability to raise militias, was dependent on the survival and success of this force. Thus the two strategic COGs for the Americans were Washington's regular Continental Army, since it was both a national symbol of the rebellion and the central source of national military strength, and the will of the American people. He therefore had to ensure that the army survived, and adopted a strategy of erosion, and went on the strategic defensive.¹⁶ From this defensive posture he would strike when the conditions permitted, like at Trenton, but would avoid direct confrontation, hoping that this strategy would wear the British leadership, and their will to fight, down.¹⁷

The British, on the other hand, had almost the opposite goals. Their strategic objectives were to end the rebellion, and bring the colonies back under British rule.¹⁸ The British strategic COGs were the will to continue the military operations so far from the homeland, resident in Parliament and the King, and the army under General William Howe garrisoned at New York. Approximately 16,000 strong, the King's Army had the training, firepower and mobility (through Britain's dominance of the sea) to annihilate the

¹⁵ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) pg 35.

¹⁶ Weigley, pg 3.

¹⁷ This strategy is strikingly similar to the strategy employed against the United States by North Vietnam in the Vietnam War.

Continental Army if it could engage it. However, as a result of the distances involved for Britain to prosecute the campaign, the British strategic centers of gravity had numerous vulnerabilities. First was that logistical support for the British land forces was extremely burdensome, relying on secure lines of communication from Britain to North America. Additionally, these extended lines of communication made command, control, and coordination between theaters of operations tenuous.

¹⁸ Mackesy, pg 32.

Chapter 2

Analysis of Opposing Plans

The Theater of Operations

The theater of operations in which the campaign would be conducted, termed the Northern Department (Appendix A) by the Americans, was some of the most rugged terrain in the 13 colonies. Because most of the theater was a heavily forested, undeveloped wilderness with limited, rudimentary roads, the principle line of communication in the theater was the Lake Champlain – Lake George - Hudson River waterway, which stretched from Canada to New York City. This LOC was a traditional invasion route for forces going to or from Canada, and formed a natural dividing line between the New England colonies and New York. This LOC cut its way through the Adirondak and Green Mountain ranges, which combined with the vegetation, numerous streams, lakes, and low-lying, swampy water basins, made cross-country movement all but impossible. Halfway along the LOC was the only urban area in the theater, the city of Albany, which was the capitol and a major port facility for the area. A secondary LOC to Albany from Canada was a rudimentary road that led east from Lake Ontario down the Mohawk Valley.

The American Plan

The Americans knew that the British would attempt an expedition down Lake Champlain as soon as the weather permitted. At the strategic level, General Washington understood the significance of the unity of the Southern and New England Colonies. He also recognized the Hudson River as a critical vulnerability, since British control of the river would enable them to sever the two regions, and give them unrestricted access into the heart of New England. Fort Ticonderoga, as the gateway to the Hudson from Lake Champlain, was a decisive point. In fact, Washington stated that there would be "almost irreparable consequences" if it fell. He also needed to protect Philadelphia, while simultaneously avoiding a full-scale attritionist type battle, which with his limited assets he could hardly afford. Therefore, his intent

was to defeat the British in piecemeal, "tempting the British to detach part of its army, which the Americans might trap or catch off guard."¹⁹ General Washington remained oriented on the British strategic COG, which he correctly assessed to be General Howe's force in New York. Since he was unclear as to where Howe would attack, he was reluctant to commit any significant portion of his army to assist in the defense of the Northern Department.²⁰ As a result the commander of the Northern Army, General Philip Schuyler (Fig.



Figure 1 - General Philip Schuyler

By John Trumbull

Source: New York Historical Society

1), was tasked to conduct defensive operations to prevent British control of the Hudson with the forces that he had on hand. However, Schuyler's army only numbered around 4,000, with approximately 2,500 at Fort Ticonderoga, and the other 1,500 "dispersed in small garrisons from Skenesboro to Fort Stanwix."²¹

The logical location for the American defense was at Fort Ticonderoga, which had been described as the "Gibraltar of North America", and was believed by many to be incapable of being reduced. Since Fort Ticonderoga had become such a national icon, the psychological impact of its defense was necessary for the continued positive morale of the people. The establishment of a defense at Ft Ticonderoga was also a logical decision based on what was considered to be the strengths of the American soldier. General Washington himself believed that "place them behind a parapet, a breastwork, stone wall, or anything that will afford them shelter, and from their knowledge of a firelock, they will give a good account to the enemy."²²

¹⁹ Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1997), pg 46.

²⁰ Although General Washington was placed in overall charge of the war effort by Congress, the Northern Department was considered a "separate command 'peculiarly' under Congressional command." In today's terms Washington was the Regional Commander in Chief (CINC) and the Northern Department was a sub-unified command. Ketchum, pg 336.

²¹ Pancake, pg 151.

²² Ketchum, pg 126.

The commander responsible for the defense of Fort Ticonderoga was a veteran officer who had served in the British Army, General Arthur St. Clair (Fig. 2). He assumed command of the fort on June 12, 1777²³, and quickly recognized that there were three major problems associated with the fort. First, it had been designed by the French to defend against invasions from the south, and was thus oriented in the wrong direction, with key terrain accessible to an attacking force. Second, it had been left in a state of neglect since its capture from the French in 1758. At the time of St. Clair's arrival it was in such bad condition that "it was absurd to expect defenders to hold out against a sizable military force determined to overrun the place."²⁴ Third, and most significantly, was the poor condition and composition of the force that St. Clair was given to defend the position.²⁵ The American force had been decimated by the Montreal campaign, and as a result, St. Clair had only 2,200 men, many of them sick and diseased, available for the defense. The defensive works at Fort Ticonderoga were designed to be defended by 10,000 men, therefore any attempt to properly man the defenses as designed would clearly overextend his lines.



Figure 2 - General Arthur St. Clair
by John Trumbull
Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art

There were three critical areas for the defense (Fig. 3). There was the fort itself, and two major terrain features that dominated the fort. A mile to the west was Sugar Loaf Hill, named Mount Defiance by the Americans, and a mile to the south was Rattlesnake Hill, later named Mount Independence. Mount Defiance and Mount Independence were both higher than Fort Ticonderoga, and were well within range of artillery fired from the interior of the Fort.²⁶ If the British gained control of either position, they could not only observe the interior of Ticonderoga, but could also range it with indirect fires. However, because of the dearth of personnel, all three positions could not be defended. St. Clair decided to defend on a north-south axis

²³ Ketchum, pg 114.

²⁴ Ketchum, pg 116

²⁵ Charles W. Snell and Francis F. Wishin, *Saratoga: National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 4* (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1959), pg 6.

from Fort Ticonderoga to Mount Independence. The objective was to control the water lines of communication to Lake George, and to protect his own lines of communication in the event that he had to execute a withdrawal from the fort. Since he did not have enough personnel to adequately cover both positions, commenting "had every man I had been disposed of in a single file along the lines of defense, they would scarcely have been in the reach of each other's voices,"²⁷ he decided to concentrate his forces at Fort Ticonderoga, and if pressed, he would fall back on prepared positions at Mount Independence.

Although he recognized the ramifications of the enemy capturing Mt Defiance, he did not attempt to secure it based on his lack of personnel, and his assumption that the British would execute an attritionist-style frontal attack on the Fort, like they had at Bunker Hill.²⁸ His only concession to the importance of Mt Defiance was a small detachment he sent to occupy Mount Hope, which controlled the only LOC in the vicinity of Mt Defiance. He also commenced construction of a water obstacle system that would prevent British forces from bypassing his defense if he withdrew to Mount Independence. Although his contemporaries and historians have

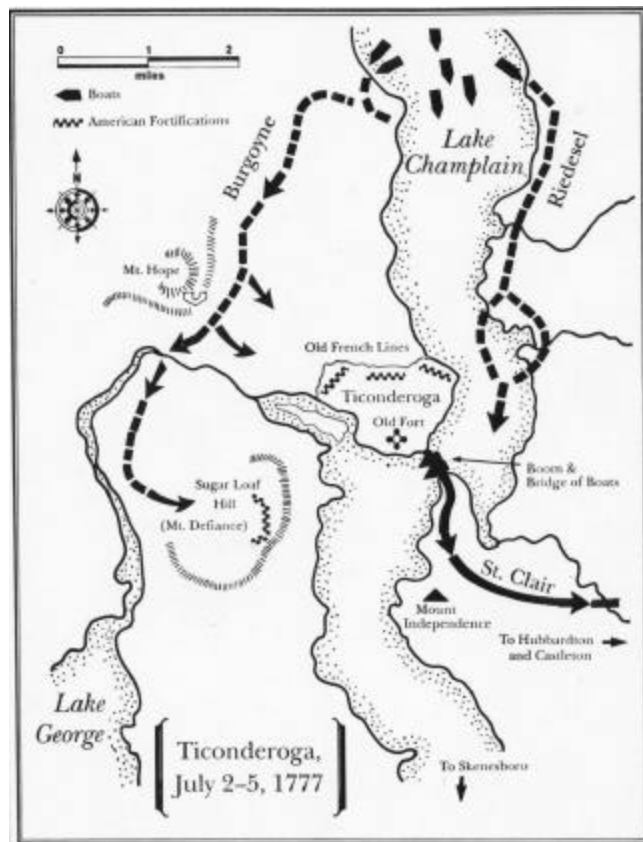


Figure 3 - Attack on Ft. Ticonderoga

Source: Mintz, pg 141.

pilloried St. Clair for his defensive posture at Ft. Ticonderoga prior to the British assault, an evaluation using maneuver warfare as a guide offers a different perspective. The flexibility inherent in the

²⁶ St Clair had no artillery assets to speak of to assist in his defense at Ft Ticonderoga because Henry Knox had taken them to Boston after their capture by Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen in 1775.

²⁷ Ketchum, pg 158.

organization of St. Clair's defense would enable him to react to any number of enemy actions. *Based on his personnel situation, and his lack of knowledge about the size and disposition of the enemy force, this was the best defensive posture that he could have assumed.*

The British Plan

General Burgoyne (Fig. 4) developed the British plan for the Saratoga campaign on February 28, 1777,²⁹ entitled "Thoughts for Conducting the War from the Side of Canada" and as a result was given responsibility for its implementation. He correctly identified an American strategic COG to be the will to fight, which was sustained by the fervent revolutionary agitation of the New England colonies (comprised of Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island). The plan he developed, which was blessed by Lord Germain, was designed to defeat this COG by isolating New England from the rest of the colonies. The assessment was that the southern colonies, deprived of the active agitation from New England, could be quickly brought under control. This would allow the British to concentrate forces on the New England colonies, and defeat them in detail. The plan, therefore, was to establish control of the Lake Champlain/Hudson River waterway (which forms a natural barrier between New York and New England, and was thus a critical vulnerability to the strategic COG) and Albany, the only major urban area in the region. Additionally, it was thought that Washington's main army, a second strategic COG, would have to be committed to counter the British advances, thus exposing it to decisive engagement and defeat.



Figure 4 - General John Burgoyne
By Sir John Reynolds
Source: The Frick Collection

General Burgoyne's plan called for a three-pronged attack, with the city of Albany as the objective (App. B). The main effort, led by Burgoyne himself, would attack southward from Montreal to Albany

²⁸ Higgenbotham, pg 189.

along the Lake Champlain/Lake George route. This force would have an intermediate objective of securing Ft Ticonderoga for use as a base of operations. It was Burgoyne's estimate that the American will to fight would crumble once Ft. Ticonderoga fell.³⁰ Simultaneously, a smaller supporting force, under LtCol St. Leger, would conduct a diversionary envelopment to the west, designed to force the Americans to disperse their forces. St. Leger's mission was to travel west down the St. Lawrence River, and then attack down the lightly defended Mohawk Valley, linking up with Burgoyne's force at Albany. A third force, commanded by General Howe, would attack north from New York City along the Hudson, also linking up with General Burgoyne in the vicinity of Albany. The endstate conditions of the campaign were the three forces linked-up and control of the Lake Champlain/Hudson River LOC established.³¹

The most fatal flaw in the plan was the lack of a unified command structure for the campaign. Britain considered Canada (General Carleton) and New York (General Howe) separate areas of command. Therefore successful prosecution of the campaign required that London clearly establish a “supporting/supported” relationship between both theater commanders and Burgoyne.³² Although Burgoyne's plan was dependent on Howe's supporting attack, Howe, Burgoyne's superior in rank and position, was never specifically directed to conduct the supporting attack by Lord Germain.³³ In fact, Lord Germain, after he approved of Burgoyne's plan, gave Howe approval to conduct a simultaneous campaign against Philadelphia, and George Washington's Army.³⁴ Due to the extended lines of communication from Britain, Burgoyne was unaware of Howe's intentions when he began the campaign. Thus, the removal of Howe's force from the campaign reduced the theater of operations to the areas north and west of Albany, and shifted the operational center of gravity from Howe's force to Burgoyne's.

²⁹ Higgenbotham, pg 176.

³⁰ Kurt Johnson, *Battles of the American Revolution* (Yugoslavia: Bonanza Books, 1985), pg 76.

³¹ Craig L. Symonds and William J. Clipson, *A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution* (Baltimore: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Co of America, Inc: 1986), pg 39.

³² Richard M Ketchum, ed, *The American Heritage Book of the Revolution* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co, 1971), pg 234.

³³ Symonds, pg 39.

Although the strategic COG analysis was conducted, an operational COG analysis was not.³⁵

Burgoyne's force oriented on Albany rather than Schuyler's Army, and as a result he never appreciated the true importance of securing the city. Had Burgoyne's plan focused on Schuyler's force, he would have realized that Albany, as an essential physical and moral support base, was more than a physical link-up point, it was a critical requirement for Schuyler, and that the lines of communication linking the city were Schuyler's critical vulnerabilities.

Another major flaw was a complete lack of appreciation for the extreme nature of the terrain in the theater. The fact that it was dependent on three widely separated forces converging on Albany for success meant that Burgoyne's forces would be fighting on extremely long exterior lines of communication, while the Americans would have the advantage of interior lines. The three forces, moving through the difficult wilderness, would be constrained to movement on known lines of communication, and would be unable to mutually support each other, thus exposing them to piecemeal defeat. The extended lines of communication would also severely tax Burgoyne's inadequate supply infrastructure (he left Canada with makeshift wagons inadequate in numbers and quality). Finally, his plan was reliant on an assumption that loyalist support in the region would provide critical logistics and personnel support.³⁶ This assumption would have fatal ramifications during the campaign.

Burgoyne's Invasion Force

The British force that Burgoyne assembled was very impressive, and, if employed properly, should have been sufficient for the task (Fig 5). However, the size and composite nature of the force created numerous friction points, many of which would be exploited by the Americans. The Germans in the left

³⁴ Billias, pg 171.

³⁵ The operational level of war is defined as "the level of war at which campaigns are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations." It is the level that links tactics and strategy, and provides the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives. MCDP 1-2, pg 100.

³⁶ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press: 1993), pg 135.

wing were professional mercenaries that had been toughed in battle in Europe, but their inability to speak English created problems.³⁷ The inability to communicate fostered a feeling of distrust, and relegated the Germans to the position of scapegoat for defeats in the campaign. Second, they were poorly outfitted for the area of operations. The dragoons, without their horses that they traditionally fought on, had to march

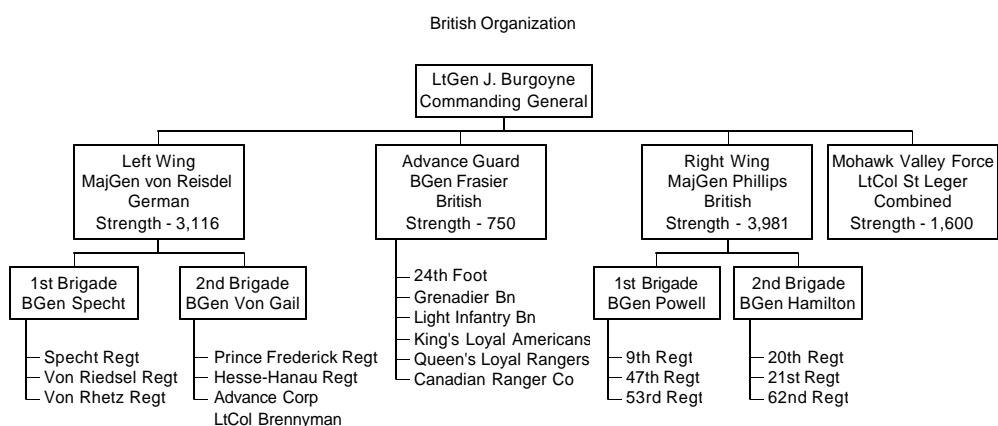


Figure 5 - Gen Burgoyne's Organization for Combat

Source Data: Compiled from Ketchum

through the hot, dense woods wearing thick wool coats, heavy jackboots, high plumed hats, and with long, straight broadswords on their sides.³⁸ Finally, since they were mercenaries, they did not have the same commitment to the war as did their British counterparts. As a result, German desertion rates throughout the campaign were a factor, since Burgoyne would not receive any reinforcements from Carleton in Canada. In fact, Burgoyne would complain that the Americans employed information operations targeted to exploit this weakness.³⁹



The advance force, led by Brigadier General Simon Fraser (Fig. 6), was a unique conglomeration of British light infantry, Canadians, American Tories, and most significantly Indians.

Figure 6 - Gen. Simon Fraser

Source: Murray, pg 55.

³⁷ Ketchum, pg 137.

³⁸ Ketchum, pg 137.

³⁹ John R. Elting, *The Battles of Saratoga* (Monmouth Beach, NJ: Philip Freneau Press: 1977), pg 21.

General Fraser was considered to be one of Burgoyne's best subordinate leaders, and his elite unit was given responsibility for conducting forward reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance missions in advance of the main body. The Indians were employed because of their "legendary ferocity, which was a psychological weapon of considerable significance...an uncanny knowledge of the wilderness, and their ability to move silently and quickly through the most difficult terrain."⁴⁰ Utilized as guides and scouts, they were an incredible force multiplier for the expedition. The reconnaissance and screening efforts of Fraser's force would provide Burgoyne with valuable information about St. Clair's disposition at Fort Ticonderoga, while blinding St. Clair to the movements of Burgoyne's force. The employment of the Indians, initially a very valuable asset, had an unanticipated effect on the Americans. As a result of the ferocity and lack of control that the Indians employed in their role as a screen, there were many atrocious acts committed against not only soldiers, but also unarmed women and children. The residents of the area were whipped into hysterics, and fearing for their lives, were leaving the region with all their goods and belongings. As the atrocities became more commonplace and visible, the hysteria would turn into "*rage militaire*". The tenuous command linkage between Burgoyne and his Indians would become another critical vulnerability that the Americans would exploit.

The conventional nature of Burgoyne's force was a significant source of friction. The lethality of Burgoyne's force was a result of drill and regimentation. The average infantryman was not expected to provide well-aimed fire, rather his role was to "point his weapon in the general direction of the enemy and load and fire on command about fifteen times in the space of four minutes."⁴¹ The generals were responsible for massing the infantrymen through close order drill so that the combined effect of the fires would overwhelm an opposing force. Once the cohesion of the opposing force was shattered, the formation would close with the enemy and conduct a final bayonet charge. While the soldier was firing from his formation, artillery would be fired in support, adding to the devastating effect. These massed infantry formations were the British tactical COG. Since a critical requirement for the infantry

⁴⁰ Ketchum, pg 99.

formation's successful execution of this style of attrition warfare relied on strict regimentation and command and control, the officers of the unit were critical requirements. Without officers coordinating the efforts, the effectiveness of the attack would quickly break down. Due to the isolated nature of Burgoyne's force, the ability to replace these officers became a major critical vulnerability. Also, the open spaces that successful implementation of these tactics required, along with the lines of communication on which their logistical support would have to travel, would become additional critical vulnerabilities to the force. Burgoyne's insistence in taking 138 pieces of artillery, the largest siege train ever assembled in North America, along with his significant personal baggage train, created nearly insurmountable logistics problems, eliminated his ability to move cross-country, and significantly slowed his movement rates.⁴² The terrain in the Northern Department was unlike the battlefields of Europe where these conventional tactics were effective, and the inability of the British force to adapt to the theater conditions would have severe ramifications.

⁴¹ Ketchum, pg 137.

⁴² Johnson, pg 77

Chapter 3

Withdrawal from Fort Ticonderoga

Although maneuver warfare is focused on defeating the enemy's COG by destroying the critical vulnerabilities, inherent in this principle is the need to protect friendly COGs with equal intensity. The opening stages of the Saratoga Campaign, culminating with the Battle of Ft Ticonderoga, offers an outstanding example of the benefits of maneuver warfare principles such as commanders' intent, flexible plans, speed, and surprise, all focused on protecting friendly COGs.

Modifications to the original plan for a static defense began on June 19th, when General Schuyler conducted an inspection of St. Clair's defense. He was dismayed by what he saw.⁴³ In a letter to General Washington, he clearly understood that the Fort, although important, was not nearly as important to the defense of Albany as the regular army. He wrote:

I was in hopes to have found the post in a better state of defense than it is...I was very disagreeably disappointed to find the troops at Ticonderoga so miserably clad and armed...many are literally barefooted and most of the ragged...the enemy cannot be ignorant how very difficult if not impossible it will be for them to penetrate to Albany *unless in losing Ticonderoga we should lose not only all our cannon but most of the army designed for the department.*⁴⁴

Beyond the condition of the fort, General Schuyler had other reasons to suspect that his defense would not be able to withstand the British assault. Deep reconnaissance units, which he had sent into Canada, had returned to report on the enemy situation. The reports that they brought back on June 10, 1777 were disheartening, since they reported significant British troops under the command of General Burgoyne were in the final stages of preparations.⁴⁵

General Schuyler and General St. Clair held a council of war on June 20th, and based upon his assessment of the situation, modified the plans that called for a defense in place at Ticonderoga. As a result of his inspection, the council concluded that the limited numbers at Fort Ticonderoga were

⁴³ John S. Pancake, 1777, *The Year of the Hangman* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1977), pg 121.

"inadequate to the defense"⁴⁶, and that "it would be imprudent to expose the army to be made prisoners by the enemy; and that, therefore, it is prudent to provide for a retreat."⁴⁷ St. Clair was now armed with his commander's intent: ensure the survival of the Continentals at all costs in order to prevent the British from reaching Albany. This intent enabled St. Clair to have more flexibility in the execution of his defense. It also demonstrates, consistent with the principles of maneuver warfare, that the Americans had developed branch plans in order to ensure the survival of the operational COG, the Continentals at Fort Ticonderoga, if the British force turned out to be overwhelming.

Although he knew that the British were coming, St. Clair still could only guess at the British intentions for the assault on his positions. He knew that the British were approaching due to the large numbers of Indians patrolling the area, but he was unable to penetrate the Indian's counter-reconnaissance screen with his own scouts. Therefore, St. Clair had to assume that the British were receiving accurate information on his disposition, while he was groping blindly.

Burgoyne Commences Operations South

General Burgoyne's mission was very simple and direct - "force a junction with Sir William Howe."⁴⁸ In fact, Burgoyne would argue later that the nature of his orders, a mission without intent, allowed for no latitude in execution.⁴⁹ Illustrating his inflexible mindset is the order that he issued to his force: "this army must not retreat."⁵⁰ Since departing Canada, Burgoyne's expedition had proceeded without trouble. On the last week in June, he had reached Crown Point and deployed his forces for the attack on Fort Ticonderoga. His plan for attack (Fig. 3) was to have the Germans attack along the east coast of Lake Champlain and seize Mount Independence, cutting off the American line of retreat to Hubbardton.

⁴⁴ Billias, pg 66.

⁴⁵ Billias, pg 64.

⁴⁶ Pancake, pg 121.

⁴⁷ Pancake, pg 121.

⁴⁸ Billias, pg 176.

⁴⁹ Mintz, pg 176.

⁵⁰ Billias, pg 174.

Meanwhile his main effort, the British Wing, would attack the American's main defense at Fort Ticonderoga. General Fraser's force was to attempt to encircle the Americans to the West, which included an attack on Mount Hope. The plan was spoiled when the Indians in the force got drunk and initiated an uncoordinated attack on the position, thus giving St. Clair a fleeting opportunity to bring the exposed force back into his main defensive position. However, by withdrawing the force at Mount Hope, he had exposed the route to Mount Defiance. Burgoyne, once he was made aware that the summit was undefended, sent an engineer reconnaissance team to see if artillery could be brought to the top. The reconnaissance team reported that artillery could indeed be brought to the summit. On July 5th, utilizing the reverse slope in order to preserve the secrecy of the move, a battery had been established at the top. Burgoyne now had indirect fire assets positioned that could bring accurate fires to bear inside the fort, and had nearly completed trapping St. Clair's force. Two critical events gave the Americans a fleeting chance. The first was that the Americans detected the establishment of the artillery positions. Second was that the German force's progress had been slowed as it encountered the difficult terrain in the vicinity of Eagle Creek, and came under observed fires from the American positions on Mount Independence. American scouts reported that the road to Hubbardton was still open, but St. Clair realized that his opportunity for a withdrawal was very limited.

As Burgoyne prepared for his final attack on Fort Ticonderoga, St. Clair called a final council of war. In concert with his understanding of Schuyler's intent, he executed a branch plan, issuing instructions for a night withdrawal from Fort Ticonderoga. Because of his precarious position, the success of the operations would be dependent on speed and complete surprise, since if the withdrawal was discovered they could be completely annihilated by Burgoyne's force. He clearly understood the immense difficulty inherent in his plan, stating that

a retreat, with an inferior army, from before a superior one, is perhaps the most delicate and dangerous undertaking in the whole circle of military operations, and that it never will be effected without prudence, fortitude, and secrecy.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ketchum, pg 181.

The plan was to move the sick, wounded, artillery, and supplies, by water to Skenesboro, while the main force would take an overland route to Castletown via Hubbardton (Fig. 7), linking up with the supplies along the way. The main force's order of march was with the Continentals in the lead and in the rear, with the militia positioned in the middle to prevent desertion. Upon reaching Hubbardton, Col Warner, who was more familiar with the area, would take up position as the rear guard.⁵² By 0300 on

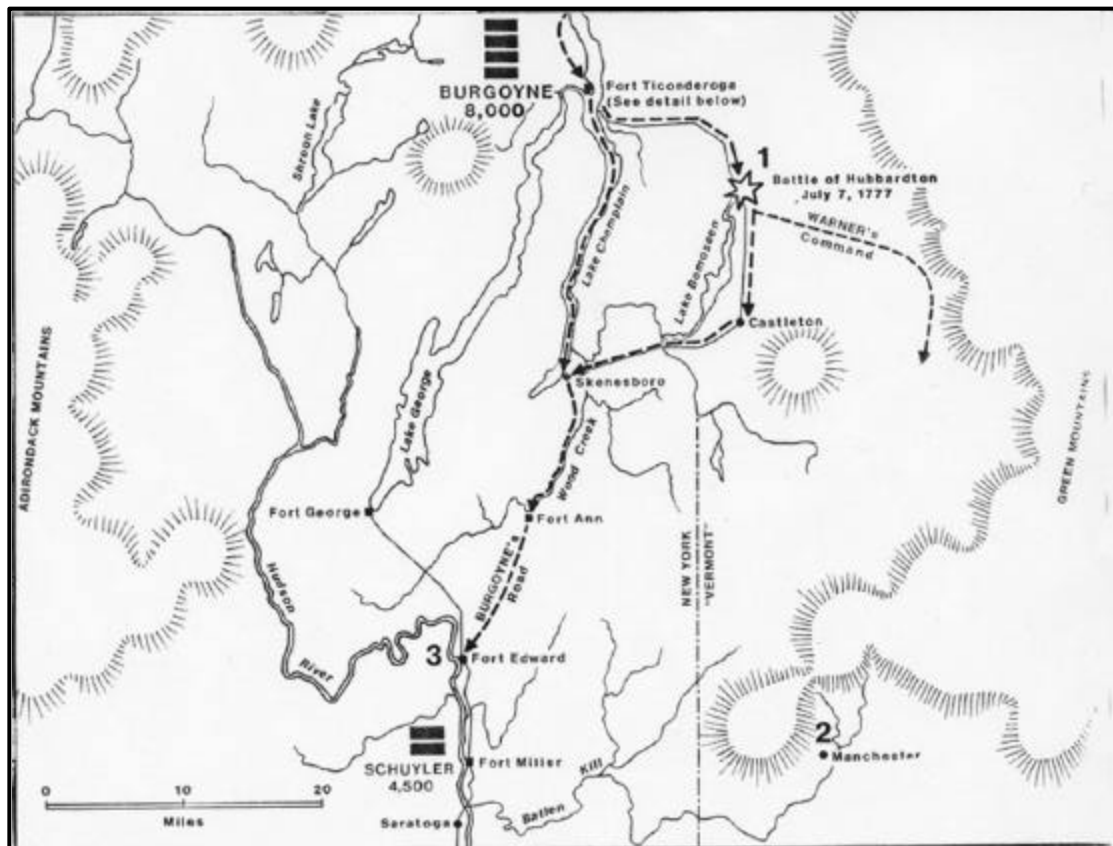


Figure 7 - Route of St. Clair's Withdrawal

Source: Symonds, pg 40.

July 5th the waterborne forces had commenced movement to Skenesboro and St Clair's main body had crossed the bridge to Mount Independence. The withdrawal was discovered, and General Fraser, without orders, immediately began pursuit with a force of 750 men.⁵³ Burgoyne ordered General Riedesel to

⁵² Ketchum, pg 183.

⁵³ Pancake, pg 123.

follow and support Fraser's operations. Simultaneously, Burgoyne ordered a pursuit of St. Clair's waterborne movement by his gunboats and several of his British Regiments.

St. Clair's withdrawal and movement to Hubbardton, conducted without stopping over the 24 miles from Ft Ticonderoga, was a remarkable feat despite the large number of stragglers. However, because his rear guard had to deal with the stragglers, they had fallen far behind the main body. The rear guard, exhausted from the movement, did not arrive at Hubbardton until 1600 on July 6th, after St. Clair had already departed for Castletown, six miles further down the road. The rear guard commander, in direct violation of St. Clair's instructions, decided to bed his force of 800 men down for the night before moving out in the morning, thereby separating the rear guard from the main body by over 6 miles.⁵⁴

As a result, Fraser's pursuit force was able to catch the rear guard and conducted an attack, at dawn the next morning without waiting for the Germans to reinforce. The attack took the Americans by complete surprise as they awoke. Frasier's plan was to have his best unit, the 24th Regiment, lead the attack into the main body of the Americans, while his light infantry unit tried to find and attack the American flank. His grenadier unit was to be held in reserve (Fig. 8).⁵⁵ The initial attack by Fraser is a clear example of the British underestimation of the American's ability to fight, since his scouts had reported that the enemy was present in great numbers.



Figure 8 - Battle of Hubbardton

Source: Mintz, pg 149.

⁵⁴ Pancake, pg 123.

⁵⁵ Ketchum, pg 195.

However, his disdain for the American forces led him to assume that his professional soldiers would make quick work of the Americans.

His attack was initially extremely successful, having achieved complete surprise, and quickly overran one of the three American regiments. Amidst the chaos, Warner was able to quickly organize the remaining two regiments and deploy them on line, taking cover behind a stone wall and piled logs. Disorganized from the initial assault, the 24th Regiment and British light infantry approached the American positions, and were stopped by a ferocious volley. The Americans, having stopped the initial British assault, then attempted to maneuver Col Francis's regiment around the left flank of the British and attack their rear, while Col Warner fixed them to the front. As the Americans conducted this maneuver and their sharpshooters began killing the British officers (thereby targeting the tactical CV), the cohesion of the British force began to unravel, and it started to look as if the Americans might win the battle.

However, Riedesel arrived and immediately attacked the right flank of the Col Francis's enveloping force. Reidesel's force, combined with the remainder of the light infantry, was eventually able to drive off Francis's Regiment. Col Warner, now faced with the possibility of encirclement, was forced to order a retreat, telling his men to "meet me in Manchester"⁵⁶

Although the Battle at Hubbardton had lasted only three-quarters of an hour, it was an extremely violent action. The British losses in this battle were significant, with a total of 198 (20% of the total force) killed and wounded.⁵⁷ St. Clair's army, however, was scattered throughout the area, and could no longer influence Burgoyne's main body. Albany, his main objective, was now within his grasp.

St. Clair's waterborne force, which had moved slowly on the assumption that the water obstacles would delay the British pursuit, was overtaken as it arrived at Skenesboro. The Americans, abandoning their supplies, conducted a fighting withdrawal to Fort Anne, where they fought the pursuit force to a standstill

⁵⁶ Elting, pg 32.

⁵⁷ Pancake, pg 123.

for a day. On July 8th, low on ammunition and with reports British reinforcements numbering 2,000 approaching, the Americans set fire to the fort, and withdrew sixteen miles south to Fort Edward.⁵⁸

The Battle of Hubbardton and the delaying action at Ft Anne, although defeats for the Americans, ensured the escape of St. Clair's force, which was Schuyler's operational COG. St. Clair, although abandoning the position upon which so many American hopes had rested, clearly recognized the importance of the survival of his army to the overall campaign. MCDP 1-2 *Campaigning* states

We must view each envisioned action...as an element of a larger whole, rather than as an independent, self-contained event...Economy dictates that we use combat actions wisely...When we are at a disadvantage tactically, economy leads to refusing to engage in battle in that particular situation.⁵⁹

Making a defensive stand at Fort Ticonderoga would have accepted an engagement when the enemy possessed overwhelming strength and positional advantage, and would have placed Schuyler's operational COG in jeopardy. Although the mission called for a defense in place at Fort Ticonderoga, St. Clair had Schuyler' commander's intent, which told him that survival of the force and defense of Albany was Schuyler's ultimate goal. Thus, quickly assessing that the situation did not favor him, he utilized speed and surprise to execute a contingency plan, and withdrew his force, thus maneuvering from a position of disadvantage and conserving his force. St. Clair stated correctly that "although I lost a post, I have eventually saved a state."⁶⁰ Additionally, as a result of the pursuit, Burgoyne's force was completely disorganized and widely dispersed from Ticonderoga to Hubbardton and Fort Anne. Therefore, recognizing that his force was dangerously overextended, he ordered a consolidation of his force at Skenesboro, which was accomplished by July 11th.

⁵⁸ Ketchum, pgs 227-228.

⁵⁹ Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-2, *Campaigning* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997) pg 65.

⁶⁰ Pancake, pg 125.

Decision Point

General Burgoyne was now faced with a critical decision point. He could march his force back north to Ticonderoga, and utilizing Lake George as a high-speed avenue of approach, attempt to reach Albany "by the most expeditious and most commodious route"⁶¹ as the original plan had been designed. He could also pursue the Americans as they retreated on an overland route from Skenesboro. He eventually decided to send his logistics by the Lake George route, and march his army overland (Fig. 7). This decision would prove fatal to Burgoyne, and is even more amazing in light of the fact that he had foreseen the incredible difficulties involved in such a movement and advised against it in his "Thoughts" for the campaign.⁶² Ironically, he had learned the wrong lesson about the character of the Americans from the withdrawal, stating that the Americans "had no men of military science."⁶³ The lesson he should have learned from the Hubbardton and Ft. Anne battles was that the Americans were capable of fighting effectively when required, and that an overland movement would be very dangerous. Although after the campaign Burgoyne gave many reasons for his decision, it reflects an attritionist mindset, focusing on physical destruction of the enemy force rather than on defeating the enemy by exploiting superior tempo. A proponent of maneuver warfare would have recognized that the American force had been rendered incapable of preventing his reaching Albany. Utilizing Lake George as a high-speed avenue of approach, Burgoyne could have gained control of Albany, severed the lines of communications (an American operational CV) between the forward-deployed American forces at Fort Edward and in Vermont, and achieved a quick victory. More importantly, it would have been a serious blow to the American will to fight, a strategic COG.

In adopting the course of action that he did, the successful execution of his campaign would now rest upon successful security of the lines of communication, with its critical hub at Ticonderoga. He sent several requests to General Carleton for additional men to guard the Fort, but, General Carleton, still

⁶¹ Ketchum, pg 239.

⁶² Ketchum, 240.

⁶³ Mackesy, pg 131.

smarting from his relief, adhered to the letter of his instructions to protect Canada and denied the request.⁶⁴ This meant that Burgoyne would have to conserve his forces, since no additional men would be forthcoming. As a result of Carleton's refusal to provide reinforcements, he was forced to leave almost 1000 men at Ticonderoga to protect this critical supply distribution point.⁶⁵ Therefore, even though Ft Ticonderoga had been captured relatively quickly and only light resistance had been encountered, Burgoyne had already lost over 1,100 men to casualties and rear guard requirements, approximately 15% of the force that left Canada.

⁶⁴ The British leadership was extremely unhappy with General Carleton's conduct during the failed campaign to destroy the Americans as they retreated from Canada in late 1776. As a result, Lord Germain gave General Burgoyne the authority to conduct the 1777 campaign, with General Carleton's forces. General Carleton was directed to maintain the security of Canada. Ketchum, pg 242.

⁶⁵ Max M. Mintz, *The Generals of Saratoga: John Burgoyne and Horatio Gates* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1990), pg 158.

Chapter 4

Shaping the Campaign

On July 7th General Schuyler arrived at Fort Edward, located a mere 23 miles from Burgoyne at Skenesboro, and conducted a reassessment of the situation. Schuyler's subsequent plan and maneuvers in the wake of St. Clair's withdrawal from Ticonderoga are a textbook example of shaping in support of operational objectives and endstates. Shaping the battlefield is a critical component of maneuver warfare, and is described by Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 0-1 *Marine Corps Operations* as:

Shaping makes the enemy vulnerable to attack, impedes or diverts his attempts to maneuver, aids the MAGTF's maneuver, and otherwise dictates the time and place for decisive action ... The goal of shaping is to eliminate the enemy's capability to fight effectively before the MAGTF initiates decisive action ... Our actions leading to this point have so shaped the conditions that the result is a matter of course...Shaping may include, but is not limited to direct attack, psychological operations,...deception, civil affairs, information management, public affairs, engineer operations...⁶⁶

Schuyler urgently requested reinforcements from Washington, stating, "all this part of the country will be in [Burgoyne's] power unless we are speedily reinforced."⁶⁷ Schuyler was a veteran of four campaigns in the French and Indian Wars, and as a result, was in a unique position to understand the complexities of conducting military operations in the Northern Department. Although Burgoyne was close, the terrain along which he would have to attack favored defensive operations. Heavily wooded, there was only one primitive dirt hewn road that connected Skenesboro from Fort Edward. The road was dotted with bridges that crossed over numerous rivers. Additionally, the area, relatively flat and located near the Hudson River, Lake George, and Lake Champlain, was extremely swampy, preventing cross country movement by heavy equipment, such as artillery and supply wagons.⁶⁸

It was at Fort Edward that General Schuyler implemented a plan that had three simple objectives. In priority, the first was to protect Albany. This would be accomplished by delaying the advance of the

⁶⁶ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 0-1, *Marine Corps Operations* (Final Draft dtd 10 Feb 00), pg 5-4.

⁶⁷ Ketchum, pg 246.

⁶⁸ The author can verify the rugged nature of the terrain. I was raised in Albany and spent my childhood exploring the woods and streams in the region.

British army in order to allow for additional armies to be raised. Second was to protect the eastward flank of the Northern Army in the vicinity of Bennington.⁶⁹ Third was to rescue the American's under attack at Ft Schuyler by St. Leger. Schuyler realized that eventually he would have to fight a conventional battle with Burgoyne in order to prevent him from reaching Albany.⁷⁰ Since his force was clearly inferior, he knew he would have to shape the battlefield so that the final battle was under conditions favorable to him. *Schuyler's operations against the British force were remarkable, and set the condition for the ultimate victory.*

He immediately sent a brigade of 1,000 men to destroy or remove bridges, chop down trees, and even alter the course of creeks so as to flood the low lying portions of the road. These shaping operations were conducted, inexplicably, without interference from British advance forces, and as a result, the Americans were able to create significant obstacles from Fort Edward to Fort Anne.⁷¹ Complementing these physical alterations of the battlespace that canalized the British movement, Schuyler implemented a "scorched earth" ⁷² policy. Since Schuyler recognized that forces travelling overland relied on foraging supplies from the local residents, he had the locals burn their crops, and move cattle and livestock far away from the British axis of advance; as a result there was no hope of Burgoyne's force of living off the land. Schuyler's shaping operations were clearly implemented to target the British CV, his lines of communication. This policy would not only delay the British advance to Albany, thereby giving him valuable time to raise, equip, and deploy his forces, but would also weaken Burgoyne's forces as it traveled further and further from Canada. Schuyler was taking advantage of interior lines of communication, while targeting the limited exterior lines on which the British were operating.

Burgoyne, who was forced to wait while all the elements of his force were properly positioned to continue the advance on Albany, aided Schuyler in his shaping operations by three weeks of inactivity. The principle reason for the delay was the movement of boats, supplies and artillery from Lake

⁶⁹ Billias, pg 67.

⁷⁰ Ketchum, pg 251.

⁷¹ Pancake, pg 125.

Champlain to Lake George, which was hampered by rough terrain, weather, and the lack of animals. The delay not only enabled Schuyler to consolidate his scattered force (St. Clair arrived with his Ticonderoga force on July 14th⁷³), but also gave Washington time to send reinforcements. Among the reinforcements sent were Generals Arnold and Lincoln, whose reputations, Washington believed, would help to raise New England militias. Schuyler sent Lincoln to Manchester, Vermont with broad orders to take charge of Col Warner's efforts to harass Burgoyne's flanks and rear.⁷⁴ His commanders were given clear orders "to retreat before the British, taking care to destroy bridges so that pursuit would be impossible."⁷⁵

On July 24th, satisfied that his supplies were in place, he commenced the attack south with General Fraser's Advance Corps in the lead, and the remaining wings scheduled to depart every two days to prevent congestion on the line of communication. Schuyler used his force of 4,500 as bait, and continued to execute a systematic withdrawal while maintaining a safe distance from Burgoyne's force. Burgoyne kept focusing on bringing the elusive force to battle and kept advancing along the road. As a result of the brilliant obstacle effort by the Americans, it took Burgoyne approximately 24 days to cover the 24 miles from Skenesboro to Fort Edward. Finally consolidating his force at Ft Edward on August 9th, he decided to wait to accumulate another 30 days of supplies before making a final push to Albany, still over 50 miles away. On August 3rd he had received word that compounded his problems; General Howe would not be attacking north to Albany, but rather had sailed for the Delaware Bay and Philadelphia.⁷⁶

The Battle of Bennington - Decisive Point in the Campaign

The shaping efforts of Gen Schuyler were having dramatic effects. General Burgoyne realized he desperately needed not only supplies, but, more importantly, pack animals so that he could continue his advance on Albany. Due to Schuyler's "scorched earth policy", he realized that he would be unable to

⁷² Ketchum, 242

⁷³ Pancake, pg 126.

⁷⁴ Ketchum, pg 247.

⁷⁵ Billias, pg 68.

⁷⁶ Symonds, pg 47.

obtain such supplies along his route of march, and the slow progress towards Albany would eventually result in a culmination of his campaign. On 11 August, he was forced to order LtCol Baum and 800 men to proceed on a foraging expedition to Bennington. This was based on reports from Philip Skene, a Loyalist advisor to Burgoyne, that there were "food and draft animals in plenty"⁷⁷ to the east in Vermont, along with information that the Americans had established a major supply point at Bennington that was weakly guarded. This decision was exactly what the Americans wanted, since their strategy was to attack the British force piecemeal.

The Baum expedition was flawed for many reasons. The force did not speak English and therefore alienated the very populous that it was supposed to obtain supplies and information from. Secondly, the Indians that were scouting ahead of the force created such fear and mayhem, that the local residents were fleeing the area with all of their livestock and stores, rather than providing support as was assumed. Third, and most importantly, the intelligence upon which the expedition was planned and launched estimated that approximately 400 rebels guarded the site was off by over 1,000, which meant that the German force was woefully understrength.

The commander of the American force at Bennington was Col John Stark (Fig. 9). Colonel Stark's performance on the battlefield at Bennington, was a direct result of his upbringing and prewar experiences. Born and raised in the New Hampshire wilderness, he possessed superb fieldcraft and marksmanship. He had served as a Major in Rodger's Rangers, and as a result "knew as much about frontier warfare as anyone you could find."⁷⁸ More significantly, he had served in the British force that had attempted to take Fort



Figure 9 - Colonel John Stark
By S. F. B. Morris
Source: The White House

⁷⁷ Elting, pg 42.

⁷⁸ Ketchum, pg 286.

Ticonderoga from the French in 1758 by executing a series of frontal assaults against the prepared positions.⁷⁹ He had seen the folly of attrition tactics first hand, and combined with his frontiersman background, was a firm proponent of maneuver tactics. He had raised a force of 1,500 New Hampshiremen, largely on his reputation. On August 8th, General Lincoln was sent by Schuyler with orders to have Stark join him at Saratoga, but Stark refused, since, as militia, was only responsible to the New Hampshire legislature. Lincoln, in accordance with Schuyler's overall concept of the operation and intent, gave Stark a broad mission of preventing Burgoyne from breaking out to the East. Lincoln then left to report the situation to Schuyler.⁸⁰ Stark deployed his force to Bennington, and left a smaller force under Col Warner at Manchester.

The Baum expedition left Fort Edward on August 9th and almost immediately came under harassing fires from American skirmishers, who had been sent out by Colonel Stark to delay and disrupt Baum's advance. These militia men, veterans of the French and Indian Wars, were superb marksmen. The Americans specifically targeted the Indians in an attempt to strip the reconnaissance assets from Baum. They were extremely effective to the point that "it seemed as if the Americans, having heard so much about the Indian atrocities, were concentrating their fire on them."⁸¹ The Indians, as a result, "were so enraged ...that they wanted to depart for Canada tonight."⁸² On 14 August, Baum reached the Walloomsac River (Fig. 10), located about four miles from Bennington. Recognizing that he was outnumbered, Colonel Baum sent a message back to Burgoyne requesting reinforcements and began establishing a defense. Colonel Stark also sent for reinforcements, directing Col Warner to bring his force to Bennington. Baum located his main force and command post on a dominant piece of high ground, where his men began constructing fortifications. However, the limited space in the position required him to split his force, and as a result he ordered the loyalists and his light infantry to establish positions at the

⁷⁹ Ketchum, pg 304.

⁸⁰ Pancake, pg 136.

⁸¹ Ketchum, pg 300.

⁸² Ketchum, pg 300.

base of the hill to the south where they could command a key river crossing.⁸³ His defensive plan effectively fractured and isolated his already limited force, and exposed it to piecemeal destruction. On August 15th, Lieutenant Colonel Breymann, with 550 men, left Fort Miller, Burgoyne's new headquarters, to reinforce Baum. Due to a faulty understanding of the situation, Breymann did not move with any sense of urgency. In fact, his slow rate of advance doomed the Baum force.⁸⁴

Stark developed a complicated plan that would be difficult for a well-trained organization to execute, much less the militia force he was leading. His plan (Fig. 10) called for a three-pronged assault on the German positions, and its success would hinge on surprise, speed, and timing. The first element, a supporting effort, was to concentrate on the dragoon redoubt, which Stark assessed to be vulnerable due to its location and relatively light number of defended. LtCol Nichols and his force of 250 men were to infiltrate around to the north (rear) of the redoubt. Col Herrick and his force of 300 men were to simultaneously conduct an arduous movement, making a wide arc to the south that involved two river crossings, and, taking advantage of the terrain and vegetation to screen their final approach, would

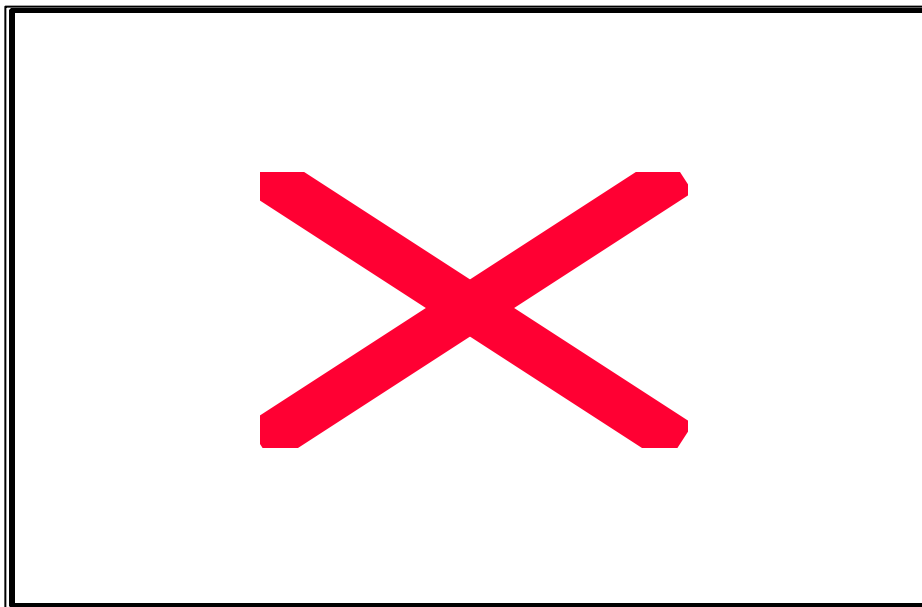


Figure 10 - Battle of Bennington

Source: Mintz, pg 179.

⁸³ Symonds, pg 45.

infiltrate to a position just south of the redoubt. On signal these two forces would conduct a coordinated attack against the German position. The second force, another supporting effort, led by Colonels Stickney and Hobart, were to attack the relatively weak loyalist and light infantry positions. Once the flanking attacks had developed, the main effort, nearly 1,200 men led by Col Stark, would assault through the small detachments in the center that linked the dragoons and the light infantry, and then concentrate against the main position.⁸⁵

At 1500 Stark launched his attack, which went exactly as planned. The two flanking efforts were incredibly successful, achieving complete surprise. The light infantry and loyalists were immediately collapsed and ran into the woods. The main position initially held, but ran out of ammunition, and collapsed when Stark commenced his main attack. Baum's force was saved from complete destruction by the arrival of Breymann, and the disorganization of Stark's force as it pursued the fleeing enemy and began looting the dead. Breymann's counterattack caught Stark's lead elements by surprise, and initially drove them back until Col Warner arrived and reinforced Stark. Forced into a defensive position, Breymann began to run short on ammunition, while Stark and Warner grew stronger as reinforcements continued to arrive. Breymann had no other option than to withdraw, and the onset of night ended the conflict.⁸⁶

Stark, acting in accordance with Schuyler's commander's intent, won the decisive battle of the campaign. His application of maneuver warfare principles, such as boldness, speed, surprise, and concentrating forces on enemy weaknesses to shatter the cohesion of the defense was masterful. The Battle of Bennington was the decisive point in the campaign for a variety of reasons. First, as a result of the battle, Burgoyne lost approximately 1,000 men, compared to the 70 men the Americans lost. These losses represented approximately 14 percent of Burgoyne's force, significant because he could not expect reinforcements from Canada. It also shattered the assumption that there were loyalists in the region who

⁸⁴ Pancake, pg 136.

⁸⁵ Symonds, pg 45.

⁸⁶ Pancake, pg 138.

would provide Burgoyne support. Additionally, the defeat disillusioned the Indians, who saw that there would be no more easy looting, and they began to leave in droves. The loss of the Indians meant that Burgoyne would no longer have the effective reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance force that had been so important to his earlier successes. Most significantly, it was a great morale boost to the American public, who no longer saw British regulars as undefeatable. Therefore, this battle solidified a strategic COG, the will to fight, which was on the wane as a result of the constant withdrawals. As a result, militia volunteers bubbled out of the countryside, and would result in a force ratio favoring the Americans for the first time in the campaign.

The Rescue of Ft Stanwix

The delaying actions by Schuyler enabled him to deal with the trouble at Fort Stanwix. The enveloping force of LtCol St. Leger (Fig. 11), whose objective was to proceed down the Mohawk Valley and link up with Burgoyne's force in the vicinity of Albany, had departed as per the plan and reached the shore of Lake Ontario near Oswego on July 25. His force of 1,600, which was made up of 800 Indians and 800 British and Canadians, disembarked and began its movement south towards Albany. The American



Figure 11 - LtCol St. Leger

Source: Collection of R. M. Ketchum

defensive position at Fort Stanwix was an intermediate objective since it controlled access to the primary LOC, the Mohawk River. St. Leger's force was lightly equipped as a result of a flawed assumption that the enveloping force would not encounter organized resistance. This assumption was based on faulty intelligence reports that had indicated that the fort was abandoned. By the time St. Leger arrived at Fort Stanwix, 750 Americans under the command of Colonel Gansevoort occupied it. Since Colonel Gansevoort would not surrender (he was in possession of 6 weeks of supplies and correctly assessed that

the British force could not penetrate the Fort), St Leger, in true attritionist manner, began a siege of the fort (Fig. 12) instead of bypassing it and continuing to Albany.⁸⁷

His static position enabled American Colonel Herkimer to raise a militia force of 800, which assembled at Fort Dayton, approximately 30 miles away. On August 6, Herkimer's force was ambushed at Oriskany (Fig. 13) as it moved to Ft. Stanwix by a force of 400 Indians and Loyalists, who had been detached by St. Leger. Surrounded, the Americans fought a fierce battle, which eventually resulted in their withdrawal, but not before

inflicting heavy losses on the British and Indian ambush force. At Fort Stanwix, as the battle was being fought, Colonel Gansevoort detached a raid force to destroy the equipment of the ambushing force. Combined with the losses incurred in the fighting, the Indian morale began to plummet.⁸⁸

Even though Burgoyne's force was within 25 miles of Albany, General Schuyler saw a window of opportunity that he could exploit to defeat St. Leger's force. On August 12, correctly assessing that his operations had significantly delayed the British advance, he detached General Arnold (Fig. 14), his most able commander, with 700 Continentals to relieve the Fort.⁸⁹ This was a risk, since Arnold's force represented almost fifteen percent of Schuyler's command.

Arnold departed immediately, and by August 17th he had

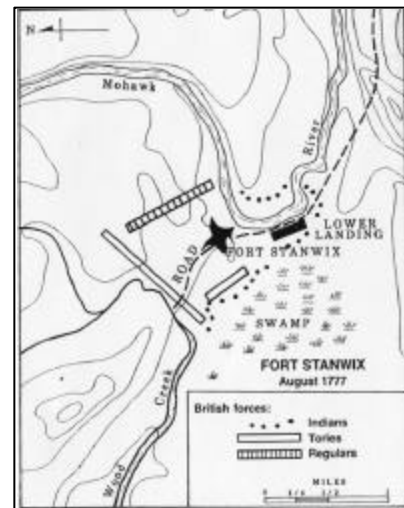


Figure 12 - Siege of Ft. Stanwix

Source: Wood, pg 120.



Figure 13 - Ambush at Oriskany

Source: Wood, pg 124.

⁸⁷ Pancake, pg 141.

⁸⁸ Pancake, 142-144.

⁸⁹ Ketchum, pg 333.

arrived at Ft Dayton, but could not raise any additional men. He then devised a brilliant plan that utilized information operations to demoralize and deceive the enemy. He released a prisoner of war with a planted story that he was on his way with "swarms of Americans".⁹⁰

Friendly Indians followed closely behind, corroborating the story. The cumulative effect of the lengthy siege, the losses at Oriskany, and the rumors of a large American force approaching had worn out the morale of St. Leger's Indians. At a council of war held on August 21, they informed St. Leger that if he did not withdraw they would leave. Since they represented half of his force, their departure would make his position untenable; therefore on August 22nd St. Leger was forced to return to Canada.



Figure 14 - General Arnold

By P. E. du Simitiere

Source: New York Historical Society

Burgoyne Continues South

Burgoyne was again forced to wait at Fort Miller for his supplies to stockpile, where he remained from Aug 11th to Sept 13th. Realizing the predicament that he was in, he gave orders for the rear guard detachments to be recalled, thus further exposing his LOCs. On Sept 10th, having finally compiled the necessary supplies to continue to Albany, he was faced with another decision; which side of the Hudson to move along. Each decision was equally unpleasant. If he traveled along the west bank, he would be fighting into the prepared defenses of the Americans, but would have an easier time crossing the narrow Mohawk River prior to reaching Albany. If he took the east bank, he would avoid the enemy concentrations, but would have to conduct a difficult crossing of the Hudson River near Albany where it was much wider, thus exposing his force to enemy action while it was vulnerable on the water.⁹¹ *The shaping efforts of Schuyler, however, had shattered Burgoyne's confidence in his ability to continue to*

⁹⁰ Pancake, pg 145.

⁹¹ Ketchum, pgs 341-342.

force his way through the American obstacles. Therefore, on 13 September he crossed to the east bank of the Hudson near Fort Miller and commenced his final assault on Albany.

Summary

General Schuyler, a superb practitioner of maneuver warfare, deserves the credit for the eventual defeat of General Burgoyne. MCDP-1 states success in war depends "on the ability to direct our efforts against critical vulnerabilities or centers of gravity and to recognize and exploit fleeting opportunities."⁹² His mission and intent to St. Clair ensured the survival of his operational COG. More significantly, he was quick to assess the enemy's critical vulnerability, using his personal experience in campaigning in the region as a framework. The plan he developed shattered the cohesion of the British advance, and as a result of the shaping operations that delayed the force, created numerous problems for General Burgoyne. Burgoyne was placed in an increasingly deteriorating situation, and as a result of his logistical constraints, had to make many decisions that played into the American strengths. First was that the delay enabled Schuyler, aided by Washington's decision to send Generals Arnold and Lincoln, to raise enough forces so that by the time that Burgoyne crossed the Hudson on Sept 13th in preparation for his final advance on Albany, his force ratio advantage had evaporated. The supply shortages created by the lengthy LOCs and Schuyler's "scorched earth" policy forced Burgoyne to send an under-strength detachment to Bennington, which was subsequently destroyed by Stark.

By making an accurate assessment of the operational situation, General Schuyler was able to risk a bold maneuver that massed forces on an exposed element of the British force, St. Leger's envelopment. St. Leger's force, initially envisioned as a diversion, became critical to the success of Burgoyne's operation due to his losses at Bennington. Combined with General Arnold's ingenious use of information operations as a force multiplier, this maneuver resulted in St. Leger's withdrawal from the theater of operations. More significantly, Arnold was able to defeat St. Leger without engaging him in battle, thus

⁹² MCDP-1, pg 49.

conserving his force of Continentals for future operations. St. Leger's withdrawal, combined with the events at Bennington, further shattered the cohesion of Burgoyne's grand plan. Thus, as a result of his operations throughout the depth and width of the battlefield, Schuyler had seized control of the tempo of operations, and wrested the initiative from Burgoyne. General Washington best described the impact of Schuyler's campaign when he wrote

I give you joy from the Bottom of my Heart on account of the fortunate and Signal stroke given by Old Stark, and also the threshing the enemy got at Fort Schuyler. There was a cloud in the North, but I really think matters in that Quarter look well just now. I trust Burgoyne will be severely mauled.⁹³

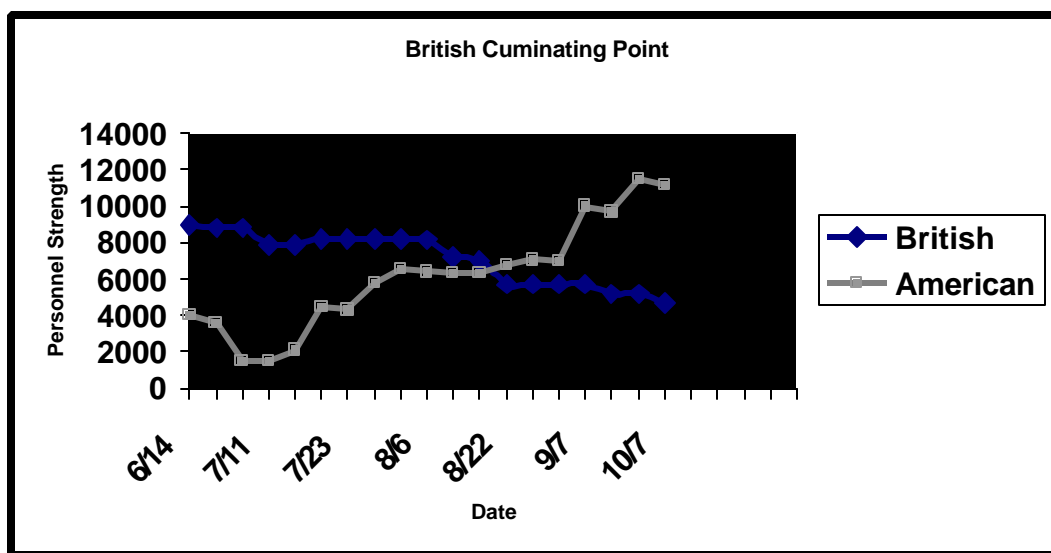


Figure 15 - British Culminating Point

Source Data: Pancake

In fact, as seen in Figure 15, Burgoyne's campaign had culminated before the main engagements at Bemis Heights had occurred.⁹⁴ The graph is plot of total American and British personnel strengths throughout the campaign. An analysis of the graph shows that Burgoyne had the greatest advantage in the week following St. Clair's withdrawal from Ticonderoga. He continued to maintain a margin of advantage until the Bennington and Ft. Stanwix defeats, at which point the Americans, receiving constant

⁹³ Ketchum, pg 339.

⁹⁴ Clausewitz defines the culminating point as the point in an attack "where the attacker's remaining strength is just enough to maintain a defense and wait for peace. Beyond this point the scale turns and the reaction follows with a strength that is usually much stronger than that of the original attack" *On War*, pg 528

reinforcements, gained the upper hand. By the time the First Battle of Saratoga would be fought, the American's would have nearly a 2:1 advantage over Burgoyne.

Chapter 5

Maneuver Warfare in Defensive Operations

MCDP-1 states

an effective defense must assume an offensive character, striking at the moment of the enemy's greatest vulnerability. As Clausewitz wrote, the defense is "not simply a shield, but a shield made up of well directed blows." *The truly decisive element of the defense is the counterattack*.⁹⁵

The First and Second Battles of Saratoga offer a superb example of the validity of this statement. The American's tactical operations while in the defense at Saratoga directly led to Burgoyne's defeat and eventual surrender.

The First Battle of Saratoga

The psychological blow to the Americans caused by the loss of Fort Ticonderoga finally resulted in the relief of Generals Schuyler and St. Clair on August 19, 1777, who were directed to report to Washington's headquarters to face a board of inquiry, and the assumption of command by Gen Horatio Gates (Fig. 16).⁹⁶ Gate's arrival was fortuitous, since the morale of the American force was beginning to flag from all of the retrograde movements that Schuyler had wisely conducted. Gates' presence, along with the news of the victories at Bennington and Fort Stanwix, had a



Figure 16 - General Gates

By C. W. Peale

Source: Independence

National Historical Park

restorative effect on the Northern Army. In addition, the 7,750 reinforcements that he had requested from Washington had begun to arrive in late August. By the first week in September he had more than 10,000

⁹⁵ MCDP-1, pg 34.

⁹⁶ Kethum, pg 337.

men under his command, including engineers, artillery, cavalry, and reconnaissance assets.⁹⁷ This figure includes Arnold's force of 1,200 that returned from Ft Stanwix, and Lincoln's 2,000 operating in Vermont. The most important force that Washington sent to Gates was Col Morgan and his corps of sharpshooters, which numbered approximately 374.⁹⁸ Col Morgan's arrival was critical, since his unit's superb fieldskills rivaled the Indians. His mission would be to strip Burgoyne's Indian screen away and, for the first time, give the American's valuable information as to British locations and dispositions. The increased force structure allowed the Americans, for the first time since retrograding from Ticonderoga, to take a stand against Burgoyne. General Gates also used information operations masterfully to raise forces. He capitalized on the brutal murder of a beautiful woman, Jane McRea, by Burgoyne's Indians (Fig. 17), and flooded the area with propaganda that transformed the hysteria caused by the Indians into a "rage militaire", from which militia units bubbled out of the countryside to avenge the atrocity.⁹⁹



Figure 17 - Murder of Jane McRea

Source: Murray, pg 52.

He first act was to reevaluate Schuyler's defense, which located at a natural chokepoint in the low, level grounds at the mouth of the Mohawk River. He correctly assessed that this defensive position would enable the British to effectively employ their massed infantry tactics and artillery, which was the British tactical COG, which he wanted to avoid.¹⁰⁰ He sent scouts north towards the British in search of more favorable terrain, which was found in a location three miles to the north at Bemis Heights, and provided a position that was ideally situated for the defense. The heights on which the main defense would be built

⁹⁷ Ketchum, pgs 345-346.

⁹⁸ Ketchum, pg 345.

⁹⁹ This was a brilliant information operation for another reason: Jane McRea, and her family, were known loyalist sympathizers.

¹⁰⁰ Billias, pg 93.

was situated at a "strategic bottleneck,"¹⁰¹ and commanded a narrow defile at its base through which the only road to Albany on the west bank of the Hudson passed.¹⁰² It was along this road that Burgoyne, with his cumbersome artillery and logistics assets, would be forced to pass. Additionally, it commanded an "unobstructed view for miles in almost every direction."¹⁰³ To the north of the position were dense woods and rolling hills, interspersed with small farms and primitive roads. Gates astutely assessed that this terrain would disrupt the traditional British plans for attack, preventing them from effectively employing their tactical COG, the forming massed infantry formations and supporting artillery fires, until they were literally upon the defense.

On September 7, he gave orders for his army to march north and begin to construct a defense on the Heights (Fig. 18). His left flank was situated on the high ground of the Heights, and was occupied by approximately 2,000 men under the command of General Arnold, with Col Morgan and his sharpshooters in support. General Learned, and 2,000 men occupied the center of his lines. His right flank was tied into the Hudson River, and was occupied by three Continental Brigades (approximately 3,000 men) led by Cols Glover, Peterson, and Nixon. His engineers destroyed bridges and obstructed the road to delay the British. His

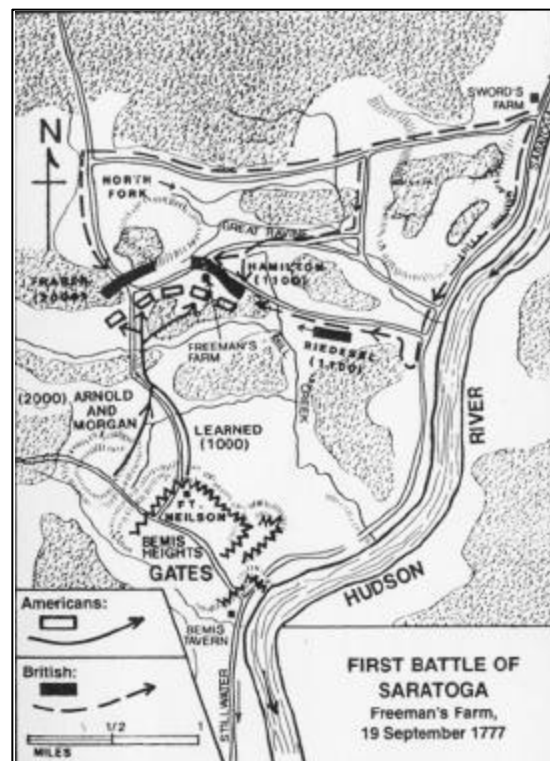


Figure 18 - First Battle of Saratoga

Source: Wood, pg 152.

¹⁰¹ Billias, pg 93.

¹⁰² Ketchum, pg 348.

¹⁰³ Ketchum, pg 348.

defensive posture had only one weakness; there was higher ground one-half mile to the west, which if occupied by British artillery, could make the American position untenable.¹⁰⁴ General Arnold, assessing his position's vulnerabilities, recognized the danger that British possession of the hill posed. He recommended to General Gates, in accordance with maneuver warfare doctrine, that they should conduct an aggressive, forward-oriented defense, with spoiling attacks conducted well forward of their prepared positions in order to disrupt the attack of the British as it formed. This type of defense, conducted in the dense forests, would clearly be to the advantage of the Americans, with their skirmisher-tactics, individual marksmanship skills, and knowledge of the terrain.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, as the British pursued them back to the main defenses, the British would be disorganized and exhausted as they approached the main American force. He understood that the worst thing that they could do was to allow the British to gain the initiative and execute a well-prepared attack. Gates, however, was content to sit behind the defensive works and allow the British, as they had at Bunker Hill, to destroy themselves as they repeatedly attempted to take the position. The decision was based on his experiences as a former British officer, who had a great appreciation for the combat power that was wielded by their forces. He therefore initially denied Arnold's request to allow him to conduct spoiling attacks.

Burgoyne, meanwhile, was facing a serious problem. Without his Indian screen, he had to rely on British loyalists, American deserters, and his own scouts to give him information about the terrain, routes, and general location of the American positions, but was essentially blind to their specific locations. He clearly understood the dilemma that he was in, and knew that he needed to quickly reach Albany. On Sept 13th Burgoyne crossed over to the west bank of the Hudson, and with 30 days of supplies in his logistics train, dismantled the makeshift bridge behind him. This action effectively severed his tenuous lines of communication with Fort Ticonderoga, and locked him into a course of action that would take him into the teeth of the American defenses.¹⁰⁶ By 18 September he had established his force at Sword's

¹⁰⁴ Elting, pg 50.

¹⁰⁵ Ketchum, pg 256.

¹⁰⁶ Pancake, pg 156.

Farm, approximately within four miles of Bemis Heights, but because of his lack of reconnaissance assets, still had no idea where the Americans were located. He correctly guessed that based on the general location of Gates' defense, the high ground to the west of the Americans was a critical. He subsequently developed a plan that divided his force into three separate divisions, each of which were to move along on three widely separated axes. His right axis, led by General Fraser, a supporting effort, was to gain the high ground and then find and attack the American left flank. The intent was to drive the Americans from their positions where they would be trapped by the Hudson River, and then destroyed by the British center wing (commanded by General Hamilton) and the German left wing (commanded by General Reidesel).¹⁰⁷ This was a flawed plan. By dividing his force into three equal elements and employing them simultaneously, he did not have a reserve that could exploit success. Additionally, the terrain and vegetation effectively isolated the three elements, and made coordinated efforts difficult, if not impossible. On the morning of September 19th, he executed the movement to contact (Fig. 18). His force moved without opposition or difficulty, and by 1200 the lead elements of the left wing were within sight of the American lines, while Fraser's and Hamilton's forces were within one-half mile of Freeman's Farm.

The Americans were well apprised of the British movements across the Hudson and towards their positions. Arnold, persistently asking for permission to conduct his spoiling attacks, was finally given permission by Gates to send out Morgan's unit to conduct a combat patrol in front of Arnold's position. If Morgan made contact with the enemy, Arnold was given permission to support Morgan with his forces, but Gates would hold the rest of his force in reserve. Arnold immediately sent Morgan forward, who came into contact with Hamilton's pickets, the lead elements of Burgoyne's center wing, at Freeman's farm. Their accurate rifle fire drove the pickets back, and Morgan ordered a pursuit, which culminated when they became engaged by Hamilton's main body and a detachment from General Fraser's force counter-attacking from the west. Morgan's men were repulsed, and retreated back to the woods where

¹⁰⁷ Ketchum, pg 357.

they reformed, and as Hamilton's force assembled, they began to snipe at the British officers and artillerymen, the British tactical critical vulnerabilities.¹⁰⁸ General Poor's brigade, sent forward by General Arnold, arrived soon thereafter, and launched an attack against Hamilton's right, attempting to penetrate into the gap between Fraser and Hamilton. However, British and German reinforcements arrived at the last moment and, taking position on Hamilton's right flank, prevented Poor's force from completing the penetration. The two opposing forces regrouped on opposite side of the farm's clearing (the battle, although violent, had only lasted 45 minutes¹⁰⁹), and commenced fighting. General Arnold continued to feed in regiments from General Learned's Brigade, and as a result of the parity of forces, the battle was extremely violent and closely contested, as both the British and Americans repeatedly fought hand to hand for possession of the artillery pieces. General Arnold, sensing that he could achieve a decisive victory with additional reinforcement, requested them from Gates but was denied. The final blow to the American's hopes for victory came as General Riedesel arrived at dusk with 500 men and delivered a counter-attack into the American's right flank. Exhausted from nearly three and one-half hours of fighting, and without hope for additional support, Arnold was forced to order a withdrawal back to Bemis Heights. Burgoyne, likewise, withdrew his force rather than conducting a pursuit at night through the woods.

Although the fight was a technically a victory for Burgoyne, several key points mitigated it. First was that Arnold's spoiling attack clearly took the initiative away from Burgoyne, and foiled the British plan to capture the critical heights to the West and conduct a deliberate, supported, attack on the American defenses. Secondly, Burgoyne suffered horrendous casualties, which he could ill-afford to absorb: he lost 140 killed and 360 wounded to the Americans 65 killed and 254 wounded¹¹⁰). Third, and most significantly, in the aftermath of the battle, the American morale was high because for four hours they had fought the British regulars to a standstill.

¹⁰⁸ Pancake, pg 159.

¹⁰⁹ Ketchum, pg 363.

¹¹⁰ Pancake, pg 160.

Burgoyne was faced with another decision. On September 21st, with his forces preparing to continue the attack, he received a letter from Clinton dated September 12th.¹¹¹ In essence it stated that he would attempt an attack north in about 10 days to Fort Montgomery with 2,000 men, but would return to New York City if the Americans opposed it in any force. Even though the letter's tone did not indicate a strong commitment to the operation, and did not specify that Clinton's objective was a link-up at Albany, it was still a reason for Burgoyne to have hope. "In about ten days" meant that Clinton might already be on the move towards him, but with the distances involved, it might take him up to two weeks to arrive.

Burgoyne's situation had deteriorated to the point that he was faced with two equally bad possible alternatives. He could continue the attack, with limited supplies and against the prepared positions of the Americans, or he could wait for Clinton's force to arrive from the South, and conduct a coordinated attack against Gates' positions from the front and rear. The risk associated with any delay was that if Clinton did not arrive the delay would allow the Americans to grow stronger while he consumed critical supplies. He ultimately decided to establish a defense and wait for Clinton, which, in hindsight, was the wrong choice. Clinton would never arrive, his expedition had returned to New York City on October 11th after a minor victory at Fort Montgomery.¹¹²

Operations to Burgoyne's Rear

One significant event would compound the situation facing Burgoyne and facilitate the American victory. General Lincoln, in command of approximately 2,500 men, was operating in Vermont with orders from first Schuyler, and subsequently Gates, to "harass Burgoyne's rear and cut off his line of escape to Ticonderoga and Canada."¹¹³ The intent was to force Burgoyne to commit portions of his limited assets to guard his lines of communication, thus preventing him from employing his entire force to the South. In mid-September, acting on intelligence that Fort Ticonderoga was lightly defended, and

¹¹¹ Ketchum, pg 375.

¹¹² Ketchum, pg 385.

¹¹³ Mintz, pg 181.

with the British main body too far away to react, General Lincoln devised a bold plan to attack the Fort. He detached a raid force of 1500, led by Col Brown, with orders to "annoy, divide, and distract the enemy."¹¹⁴ The first element was to secure the withdrawal route in the vicinity of Skenesboro, while the second supporting element was to make a feint towards Mount Independence, and be in position to assist the main effort. The main effort was to attack the Lake George landing, releasing prisoners, and destroying critical supplies and boats. If the opportunity presented itself, Colonel Brown was to attack Ticonderoga itself. The operation, executed on September 17th, was a complete success. Colonel Brown's raid destroyed all the wagons, all but twenty boats on Lake George, destroyed supplies, removed livestock, and freed 118 prisoners. Additionally, he captured approximately 270 of Burgoyne's men, along with hundreds of small arms. Loses to the Americans were 4 killed and five wounded. This attack exacerbated Burgoyne's dilemma, since it demonstrated that his old lines of communication were no longer secure, making withdrawal back to Ticonderoga an extremely dangerous proposition.

Additionally, Col Stark, with 1,000 men, had been posted along the eastern shore of the Hudson to interdict the British LOCs and would eventually establish a blocking position on the west bank to prevent the British from retreating.¹¹⁵

The Second Battle of Saratoga (Bemis Heights)

The maneuver warfare techniques employed by the Americans were finally taking its toll on Burgoyne's force, and had clearly placed him in a dangerous situation. His force was now at approximately 5,000, not including the sick and wounded¹¹⁶. He correctly assessed that he soon would be unable to continue offensive operations, since his force was already on half rations due to his logistical constraints. As a result of the American operations to his rear, he understood that his only recourse was to make one last effort to reach Albany.

¹¹⁴ Ketchum, pg 377.

¹¹⁵ Pancake, pg 189.

¹¹⁶ Symonds, pg 50.

His defeat at the First Battle of Saratoga had shown General Burgoyne the futility of attempting to attack the Americans without first knowing their disposition. Therefore, on October 7, he dispatched General Simon Fraser with a force of 1,500 to conduct a reconnaissance in force in order to shape the battlefield to facilitate the main attack. General Fraser moved out in three columns, traveling three-quarters of a mile to the west to the edge of a wheat field, where he deployed his force on line.¹¹⁷ His defensive lines stretched for over 1,000 yards, anchored on the left and right by dense woods. (Fig.19). His defensive posture ignored the American strengths of being able to move rapidly through difficult terrain, and limited the amount of observation that his line was able to command, thus opening him up to a surprise assault. The decision by General Fraser, to halt his force and deploy them at the wheat field did not provide the British with any information about the American defenses, but in fact facilitated the British destruction.

American scouts had detected Fraser's force as they moved into the wheat field, and on the basis of a detailed reconnaissance report by his adjutant, General Gates saw an opportunity to destroy the detachment.¹¹⁸ He developed a simple plan that capitalized on the American strengths. General Lincoln's force of 3,000, on the American left flank, was given the task of destroying Fraser. Colonel Daniel Morgan with his 800 sharpshooters, a supporting effort, was sent to fix Fraser's force and attack the right flank. General Poor, in another supporting effort, was assigned to simultaneously attack the British left.

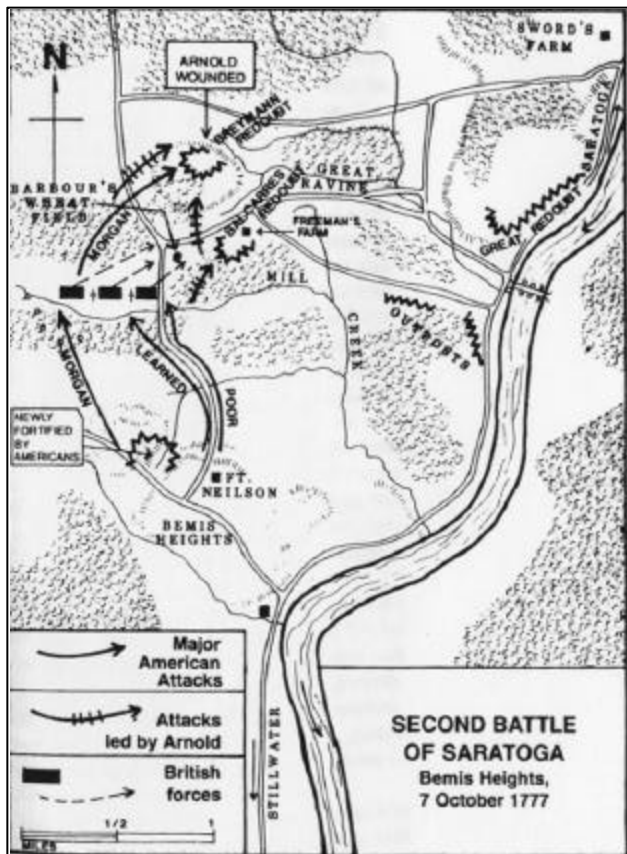


Figure 19 - Second Battle of Saratoga

Source: Wood, pg 165

¹¹⁷ Symonds, pg 50.

Once these attacks had developed and disrupted the British lines, General Lincoln and General Learned, with the main effort, would attack the center, occupied by the Germans, and complete the destruction.¹¹⁹

The plan initiated with a message from General Gates to "Order Morgan to begin the game."¹²⁰ The attack began at 1430 with General Poor's attack on the British left flank. The attack was swift and violent, and the New Hampshire brigade's accurate fires forced the Grenadiers to fall back. They attempted to regroup and restore the defensive position, but their leader was shot and killed, and subsequently the leaderless Grenadiers broke contact and withdrew.¹²¹

Around the time that the Grenadiers were falling back, Colonel Morgan's brigade commenced their attack on the British right flank, occupied by General Balcarres' light infantry. The violence of the assault drove the light infantrymen back in disarray. Simultaneously, General Learned launched his attack into the British center. Although the Brunswickers were able to withstand the initial assault, the retreat of the Grenadiers to their left had exposed their flank. As a result, they were beginning to take fire from Poor's Brigade as it continued to exploit the momentum of the attack. General Fraser, sensing the danger that General Morgan's attack on the right flank posed to the entire defense, attempted to rally Balcarres men, but was also shot. Leaderless, the Balcarres brigade broke, completely exposing the Brunswickers in the center.

Burgoyne, if he wanted to save the force from complete annihilation, had no choice but to order a general retreat back to two strong points known as Breymann's and Balcarres' redoubts, where he could reorganize his defense. The turning point during this battle emerged as the British retreat began. General Arnold, who had been relieved of command by General Gates due to a petty quarrel, arrived on the battlefield and reorganized the American force. Rather than consolidate on the positions that they had just secured, he realized that by exploiting the momentum of the attack and maintaining contact with the

¹¹⁸ Pancake, pg 184.

¹¹⁹ Snell, pg 22.

¹²⁰ Snell, pg 22.

¹²¹ Pancake, pg 184.

retreating British force, he had an opportunity to complete the destruction of the British before they could reorganize.

Arnold initially assaulted the British at Balcarres' redoubt, but was repulsed. Rather than continue to throw forces at the strong position, he shifted his attack to an exposed, weaker force of Canadians and Loyalists that were defending the terrain between the two strong points. This position was quickly reduced, at which time Arnold shifted his attack to Breymann's redoubt. He conducted a violent, coordinated attack from the front and rear, which resulted in a breach of the fortifications, through which the Americans poured and drove back the Germans.¹²² The loss of this redoubt completely exposed the stronger Balcarres redoubt, and forced Burgoyne once again to order a retreat. The Americans, due to exhaustion, disorganization, and the onset of night, did not pursue.

This battle is a classic illustration of the American's successful application of maneuver warfare tenets. The initial plan utilized supporting efforts of speed and surprise to disrupt the cohesion of the British defense. Once the defense was penetrated, the main effort, heavily weighted, exploited the penetration and completed the defeat. During the battle of the redoubts, an attritionist would have continued to throw forces at the strongly held Balcarres redoubt in an attempt to destroy the stronger force. General Arnold, however, was a maneuverist, and avoided the "surface" of the Balcarres redoubt and instead reduced the essential, weaker, supporting elements of the position, the center and Breymann's redoubt. By exploiting these "gaps", he was able to defeat the entire British position by rendering the strongest position exposed and untenable.

The results of the battle had grave ramifications for General Burgoyne. His force had 600 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner. The American losses were relatively light, losing approximately 150. The Americans, however, would be able to replace their losses; the British could not. Since leaving Canada, Burgoyne's force had been reduced to approximately 4,100 effective. Most significant was the loss to the

¹²² Snell, pg 24.

officer corps, a result of the American sharpshooter efforts, which included the death or capture of over 90 principle commanders.¹²³

Aftermath

Although Burgoyne was able to withdraw from the field of battle, his confidence had been destroyed. On October 13th, he held a council of war with his commanders, at which he discussed his options. His situation was so grave that he could not attack, nor, with only five days of supply left, could he maneuver around the American's position or march the army back to Fort Edward. A proposal to disburse the force and have every man infiltrate individually back to Fort Ticonderoga, but it was disregarded. The American's operations had placed General Burgoyne in a situation where every option available led to destruction. Therefore, in order to avoid further bloodshed, Burgoyne sent a messenger to Gates with a draft surrender document.¹²⁴

On October 17th, as a result of intense negotiations, General Burgoyne was allowed to surrender (Fig. 20) under the terms of a convention, which was an honorable way to allow him to lay down his arms. He formed up his force, stacked all available arms, and



Figure 20 - Burgoyne's Surrender

By John Trumbull

Source: Yale University Art Gallery

¹²³ Pancake, pg 187.

¹²⁴ Ketchum, pg 419.

marched his force to Boston as a prisoner of war. The campaign was over, and the Americans had achieved their operational objective of preventing the British from establishing control of the Hudson. The British force had been decimated. General Burgoyne's force, as it left for Boston, was a mere shell of the unit that had left Canada in June. Of the approximately 9,000 men that had crossed into the Northern Department, only 4,991 were present for muster on October 17th.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The Saratoga Campaign offers a unique case study in the superiority of maneuver warfare as a warfighting philosophy. Maneuver warfare, as defined by MCDP-1 is an intelligent approach to attacking the enemy, and relies on an in-depth understanding of the enemy's capabilities, which includes key sources of strength (or Centers of Gravity) and the corresponding weaknesses (Critical Vulnerabilities). Maneuver warfare is a philosophy of defeating the enemy's strength, not by attacking it head-on, but by destroying vulnerable components upon which the strength depends. This is accomplished through an agile and flexible approach to warfare, typified by mission-type orders and commander's intent, which allows a force to operate with superior tempo through which the cohesion of the enemy system can be shattered. By establishing superior tempo, the enemy is placed in increasingly dangerous dilemmas, where each choice results in a situation more favorable to the maneuverist.

The defeat Burgoyne's force in the Saratoga Campaign was not the result of luck, but rather the masterful application of maneuver warfare techniques. The American conduct of the Saratoga Campaign is a textbook study of maneuver warfare at the operational and tactical levels. The campaign pitted a highly trained, professional British army (which at the time was considered one of the most powerful in the world), well-versed in European attrition tactics, against a smaller, makeshift American force. The Americans, led by Generals Schuyler, St. Clair, Gates, and Arnold, and Colonels Stark and Morgan, were able to defeat the British because they employed maneuver warfare principles, a philosophy that was uniquely American, born out of the frontier experience. Although he was tasked to conduct a defense at Fort Ticonderoga, St. Clair's decision to withdraw in the face of superior force was in concurrence with Schuyler's commander's intent. By executing the withdrawal, he ensured the survival of the operational COG. Once Burgoyne made his fateful decision to take the overland route to Albany, Schuyler developed a brilliant campaign plan. He quickly and accurately assessed friendly and enemy COGs, and implemented operations that targeted enemy critical vulnerabilities and protected his own. His shaping

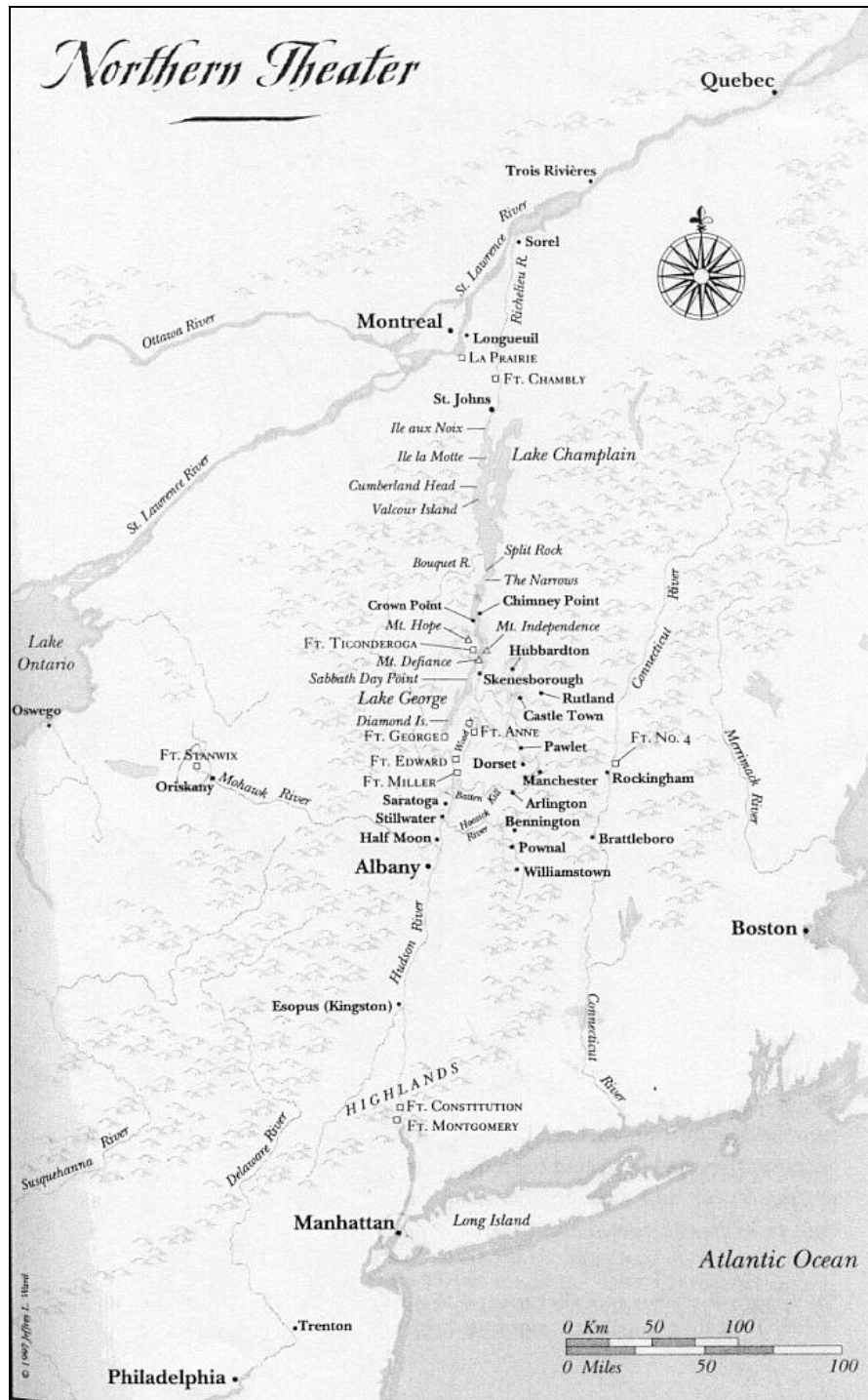
operations canalized British movements to a single LOC, which made their movements predictable. His obstacles delayed the British advance to the point that Burgoyne was forced to wait several times to build up supplies, which facilitated recruitment and reconstitution of the American force. The delays so impeded Burgoyne's progress that Schuyler was able to risk detaching sizable portions of his force to concentrate on separate enemy elements at Bennington and Ft. Stanwix. As a result of Schuyler's shaping, Burgoyne's cohesion was shattered, and his campaign culminated before he reached the field of battle at Saratoga.

Gates, wisely listening to General Arnold, conducted an aggressive, forward oriented defense that seized the initiative from the British attacks and clearly disrupted their preconceived plans. Tactically, the Americans showed a proclivity for seeking gaps and avoiding surfaces. As a result of the two failed attacks on the American's defensive positions at Bemis Heights, Burgoyne was placed into such a situation that he was forced to surrender or suffer annihilation. Burgoyne's surrender clearly demonstrates the superiority of maneuver warfare as a warfighting philosophy. As Bunker Hill demonstrated to the British that the American's would fight, Saratoga demonstrated to the British and the world audience that they could fight, and fight well. More importantly, they fought with an effective style that was a unique admixture of European techniques and their frontier experience, heretofore unknown of on the fields of battle in Europe. In the wilderness of Northern New York, and on the field of battle at Saratoga, the American way of war was born.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Matthews, Dr. J. B. *Notes on First Draft* dtd 15 Jan 01

Appendix A

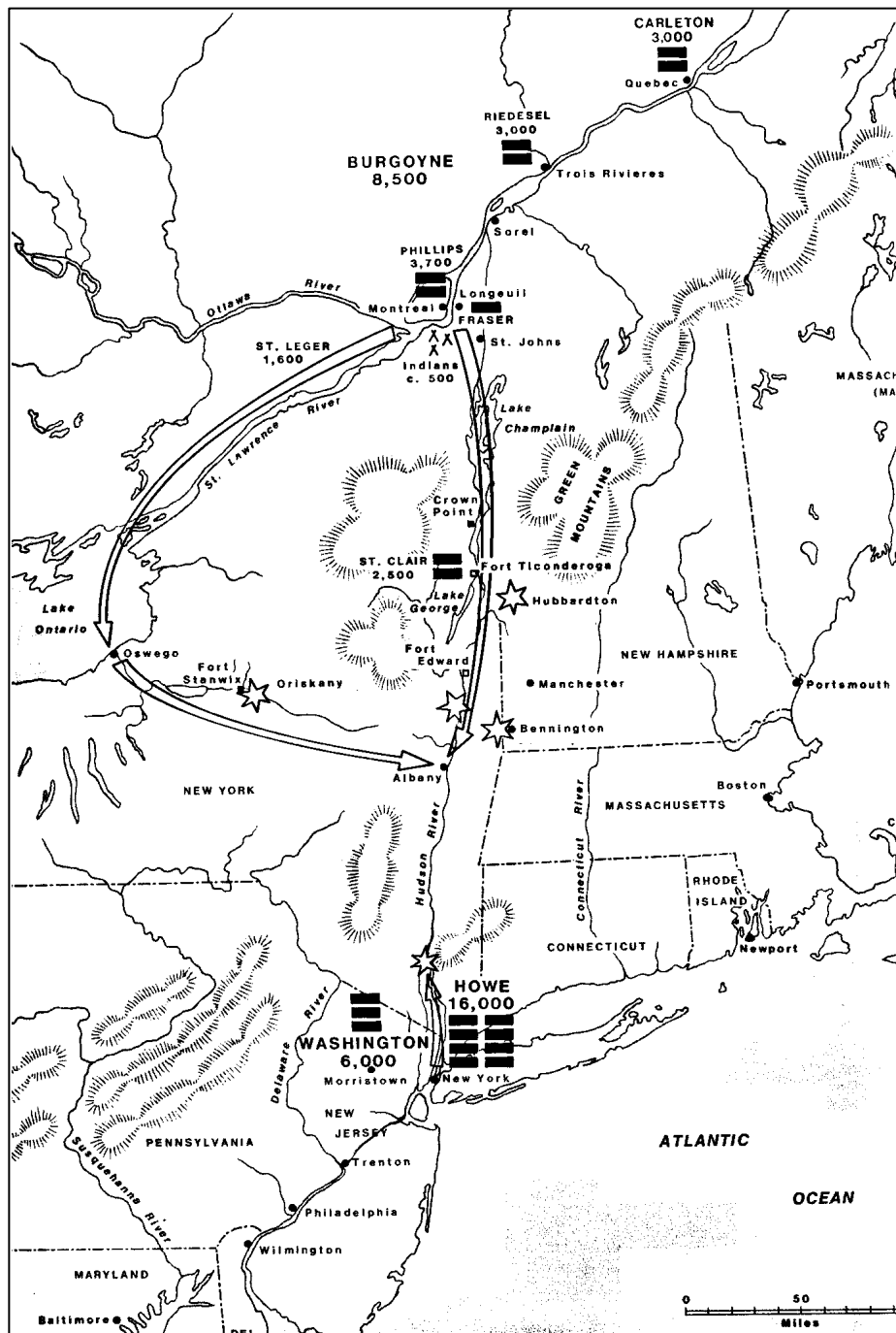
Northern Department



Source: Richard M Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1997), pg 25.

Appendix B

General Burgoyne's Plan



Source: Craig L. Symonds and William J. Clipson, *A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution* (Baltimore: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Co of America, Inc: 1986), pg 38.

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